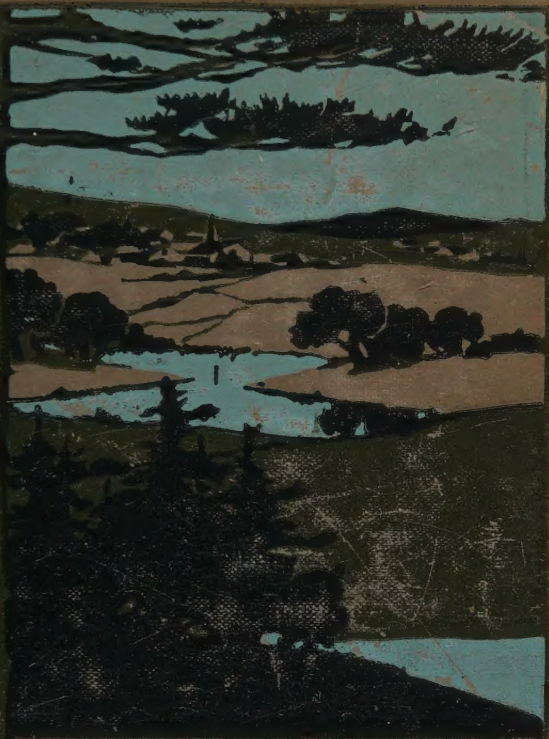




DORCASTER DAYS

A. G. PLYMPTON

DORCASTER DAYS



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"THEA STOOD UNDER THE PINES, CALLING TO THE SQUIRRELS."

See p. 127, Frontispiece.

Dorcaster Days

BY

A. G. PLYMPTON

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OF THE WILDERNESS," "THE SCHOOLHOUSE
IN THE WOODS," ETC.

Illustrated from Drawings by

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CHAPTER I

THERE was an unusual number of persons in the library as Thea Croft entered, intending to take out a "nice story." Miss Price, the librarian, being busy, however, she joined a group of girls about her own age who had come on the same errand and who, while waiting, were discussing the books they were returning, generally disposing of them, however, with great despatch under one or the other of two heads, as, for instance, "awfully interesting" or "no good," by these simple phrases recommending or condemning a story without giving themselves the trouble

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to make the nice distinctions that keep the critics busy.

The Dorcaster library was a medium-sized room in the town hall, uncomfortably pinched for space. Beside the librarian's desk there was a large table covered with magazines, and chairs were set around it for the convenience of readers. In one of these chairs sat Miss Susan Pray, diligently copying from some domestic or family magazine. She had dozens of blank books at home filled with "choice receipts" which she had copied from various publications of this sort, and was seen at the library so often that she was considered a literary character. A receipt with a French name and unfamiliar ingredients especially appealed to her, the more elaborate the better. One might get the idea from them that Parson Pray, whose sister and house-keeper she was, must fare sumptuously

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every day, but as a matter of fact Miss Susan never used these receipts at all. She also copied "rules of etiquette" and "useful remedies," and it was said in Dorcaster that once their poor old minister, having cut his foot when mowing, nearly bled to death while she was looking through her books to find a special prescription for his relief.

As she came in, Thea collided with a young woman with her nose in a book, as the phrase goes. This was Miss Amelia Phipps, who always chose a story representing life as different from her own as possible. If, in turning over the pages of a book, her eye lighted upon such a phrase as, "I cry you mercy, good Sir," or "Zounds, I'm a man of honor, and I say no more than my sword will make good," she took it on the spot. In truth she read so many stories of this class that, as she

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once confessed, it had become difficult to use the language of the present day. Had she not recollected herself in good time no doubt she would have cried out upon Thea, who was almost upset by the shock:—

“God help thee, poor monkey, for ’tis by good hap, indeed, if I have not knocked out of thy head the little wit He has given thee.”

Throughout the room the remarks of a dressy little old maid, who was standing by the librarian’s desk looking over the books upon it, were distinctly audible.

“These stories of New England village life are curious, aren’t they, Mrs. Libby?” she was saying to an acquaintance. “You’d think to read ’em that women in country villages do nothing but make patchwork quilts. I don’t believe I’ve seen any one make a patchwork quilt in years an’ years. Listen to this now,” she interrupted herself,

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taking up one of the books and reading from it:—

“““If that bread ain’t good it’s due to the raisin’s,” said Miss Mehitable as she lifted the pan to the shelf over the stove. “Jemima’s raisin’s ain’t never so good as mine.” She then flew to the spare room and proceeded to array herself in her Sunday best. This was a green delaine made with a full skirt and a low waist with a bertha —’

“Isn’t that ridiculous?” demanded the Dorcaster lady, dropping the book, and turning a pair of ironical eyes to her companion. “As if *anybody* makes bread with *raisings* in these days when there isn’t a village from Boston to Way-back where you can’t get compressed yeast. And a green *delaine*: I don’t believe you can find one in Massachusetts.”

“Made *with a bertha*, too!” exclaimed

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her friend with equal disdain. "Why you can get Buttrick's patterns all over the world — There's Dr. Derby! What does he want in the library, I wonder!"

The doctor, a large, burly man with heavy eyebrows and a grisly beard, instantly gratified her curiosity by announcing in his deep bass:—

"Miss Price, I came in to get a card."

Dr. Derby was a newcomer in Dorchester, having taken old Dr. Vesey's practice, and he, therefore, had the fascination of a person with unknown habits and a past that must be thoroughly investigated. Dr. Vesey had never patronized the library, and it seemed to most of those who now turned their attention to his successor, that to wish a card argued light-mindedness unbecoming in one of his grave profession.

At this moment, however, a new arrival diverted attention from the doctor. This

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was Amy Carew, a girl of perhaps thirteen years, very pretty and with the manner of one who expects attention. She was the daughter of a wealthy and liberal widow, who had a beautiful summer home in Dorcaster, and she had an air decidedly different from that of the village lassies. Although not over-dressed, she had the elegance, the daintiness, that come from a luxurious style of living, and you could not think of her wiping the breakfast dishes, getting chips for kindling, or performing any of those humble tasks that fell to the share of the Dorcaster girls.

On reaching the desk she said to Miss Price with a beaming, benevolent-fairy smile that included everybody: —

“Mamma is going to let me give a library to Dorcaster. It’s to be a lovely little stone building and the reading room is to have an open fireplace. It’s in honor of

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my birthday, and I just *had* to stop to tell you about it."

Murmurs of delight and approval ran through the room, while Miss Price's appreciation gushed out in a torrent that was only checked by a sudden movement of impatience on the part of Dr. Derby.

"Come, come, Miss Price," he said, tapping on the desk. "My Lady Bountiful will wait while you make out my card. A sick and suffering child is waiting for me at Pleasant Corner."

"Certainly, attend to the doctor first, Miss Price. I didn't mean to interrupt," said Amy prettily; but privately she wondered why, if he was in haste to reach a patient, he should stop to take out a card.

While the librarian made out the card, the doctor turned to the children who were bunched together like sheep, looking in awed admiration at Amy Carew.

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“I’d like to have you recommend a nice story — the most interesting one in the library,” he said to them.

“Oh, ‘Rebecca, Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm,’” answered the children, as in one voice, while the older persons looked at each other significantly at this evidence of immaturity in the man to whom they were to intrust their lives.

“Please give me ‘Oh, Rebecca, Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm,’” the doctor said to Miss Price as she gave him his card.

“You see,” he explained, as the librarian went off to look up a copy of this popular tale, “this little patient of mine needs something interesting enough to make her forget her pain. She lives at Pleasant Corner, and I understand that the people there are not allowed the privilege of the library. Why is that, Miss Pray?”

Pleasant Corner was a subject studiously

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avoided in conversation by Dorcaster people. The condition of things in this little settlement, made up of the workers in the tin factories, was deplorable — a disgrace to civilization and more especially to its nearest neighbor, the town of Dorcaster. Such efforts, however, as had been made to improve it had come to nothing, and people had at last settled down to the idea that it was a hopeless problem. Miss Pray moved a little uneasily in her chair as she answered: —

“Pleasant Corner is outside the town limits.”

“Fiddlesticks!” cried the doctor, looking sharply at her from under his eyebrows.

“And they are mostly foreigners there anyhow,” Miss Susan went on, coloring a little. “They can’t read English, most likely can’t read at all, and they are so dirty that if the books went down there we

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should have all sorts of awful diseases brought back to us."

"And you think, of course, that the best cure for such sore spots is neglect," said the doctor with a sort of snort. "See here, Lady Bountiful," he said, turning to Amy Carew, "what would you do if you had a brother kidnapped in childhood, brought up among the 'dirty' and 'ignorant' poor, and now suddenly restored to you?"

"Oh, I don't know," answered Amy, "but I should be sorry for him."

"Yes, you'd be sorry for him. That's the right beginning, and you wouldn't turn your back on him, would you, and let him keep on as before? He would be ignorant, unambitious of improvement, perhaps even wicked. Nevertheless, he would be your brother, *your very own*. You would feel that his degradation degraded *you*, and

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you would wince at every evidence of his inferiority. Well, then, first you would reinstate him in his rightful place in the family, sharing with him all your advantages, all your inspiring influences. With your nicest tact you would try to show him where he was wrong, and to stimulate his ambition. You would be patient, too, remembering how he was handicapped, and you would look for good in him as a miser looks for a lost sixpence. Yes, if you are the sort of girl I take you for, Lady Bountiful, that is what you would do."

"Oh, I'm sure I should," murmured Amy.

"So then," the doctor went on with a glance at Miss Susan, who, having just finished copying "A Sure Remedy for the Bite of Snakes," was listening intently, "if we really believe in brotherhood, that's the spirit we should show toward those Pleas-

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ant Corner people. Ignorant and dirty as they are, they are our brothers and their degradation degrades us. Every time one of them looks at me, I feel that he is reproaching me for the condition he is in, and I'm sure you would feel the bond, if you could see this little patient of mine, whose eyes look up with such supplication, as if she said, 'I am your *sister*. Oh, yes, your poor little sister, who lies here suffering day after day. Be faithful to me!' "

There was silence for a moment in the Dorcaster library. Then the lady who had been curious to know the doctor's errand asked: —

"Is it that Ryan child who was hurt when the factory burned?"

The doctor nodded.

"Acted as if she was wild, folks said," struck in her friend; "they couldn't keep

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her out of the burning building, she was that determined to find her father."

"A poor specimen of a father, too, according to all accounts," exclaimed Miss Susan.

"Yet there was some good in him," interrupted the doctor, "for his child loved him. Even now she grieves for him more than for her own hurts, though she knows she may be a cripple all her life."

The doctor took the book Miss Price now brought him and would have left the library, had it not been for Thea Croft, who, detaching herself from the group of children, now claimed his attention.

It was plain that some strong emotion overcame a native reserve that had hitherto checked all expression of the interest she felt in what had passed. The color came and went in her cheeks, but her large soft eyes looked unflinchingly into the doctor's as she said:—

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"I wouldn't take her that story, after all. Rebecca was strong and did all sorts of splendid things, and I think it will make her remember how she has been hurt, and may never be able to do anything herself all her life."

The doctor looked down at his adviser with an air of interest.

"Upon my word," he exclaimed at last, "you have a head-piece, haven't you? You actually take the trouble to *think*! Very few people do that, so you shall choose a book for Katy yourself."

Thus commissioned, Thea indicated a book which one of her companions was returning.

"It's just fairy tales," she explained, "and all the wonderful things that are done in it are done by the fairies."

"Fairy tales, eh?" said the doctor. "Bravo, that's just the thing." And off he

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went in a hurry with the book under his arm, oblivious of library rules, which required that its number should first be set down on his card.

CHAPTER II

WHAT Dr. Derby had said in the library about Katy Ryan, the child who had been hurt in the burning factory, made a deep impression upon his young hearers and upon none deeper than Amy Carew, for she had by nature a kind heart and it was always easy to work upon her mobile sympathies. It was this that moved her to invite Thea Croft to spend the day with her.

The Croft farm and Lynwood, as the Carews called their place, were side by side, and in early childhood Amy and Thea had been playfellows. In those innocent days Amy no more questioned the social importance of her companion than a daisy would look down upon another daisy, and the two were inseparable. For the last

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three summers, however, they had seen little of each other. The beauty of its rolling hills and lovely blue river had attracted people to Dorcaster. Several fine estates were now within driving distance from Lynwood, which furnished Amy with all the young companionship she needed. Then, during these years, Cora Redmond, her favorite cousin, had made her long visits each summer, during which time she was independent of outsiders. These girls gave her a standard of comparison by which, in some ways that seemed important to Amy, poor Thea was found wanting. When they met she tried by extra kindness to cover this new sense of superiority, this feeling of a distinction between them, but Thea seemed to divine it and to refuse the base metal of condescending politeness in place of the true gold of the heart.

The Crofts were considered very eccen-

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tric in Dorcaster, and their manner of life was certainly, in many respects, different from that of other people. While in the homes of all Thea's acquaintances the tendency was to make life more difficult and elaborate, in her own simplicity was striven for, giving freedom from worry and haste. In her early married life Thea's mother had been delicate, and her husband insisted on a life spent mostly in the open and on a simple, pure, and cleanly diet, which released her from the drudgery of continual baking, broiling, and frying. When her health became robust, as it soon did, the hardy nature life with its serenity and leisure, its manifold interests, its charming acquaintances in furs or feathers, its healthy appetite for simple fare, seemed too good to be exchanged for formality and daintinesses. Thea could not remember having seen her father or mother nervously wrought up,

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irritable, or too busy over trifles to respond to any call from their children for sympathy in their work or play. The difference in such ways between Mrs. Croft and the worn and impatient house-mothers among their neighbors was conspicuous, and Thea infinitely preferred her own home to any she had ever seen. Still, what girl of her age is independent of the opinion of her acquaintances? When her friends came to see her she winced at their half-concealed surprise at the plainness of the fare set before them. When, for instance, the ladies' church alliance met at their house, sponge cake and lemonade were offered instead of the usual more elaborate and expensive dainties, and the difference in money was used to secure the presence of a bright little Japanese lady in the pretty costume of her country who spoke on the customs and life of Japan. It was so in-

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teresting and the meeting was so unusually pleasant that one might think the innovation in the matter of refreshments might have been overlooked, but disagreeable remarks were made on this example of Croft queerness, which were duly reported by Molly Miggs, who did the family's washing. Since the other members of the household looked upon the matter as one of trifling importance, or even with amusement, Thea would not have owned for worlds how much mortification it caused her, but she did hate to be unlike other people, and the many trials of this sort would have been past bearing, had it not been for the adoration she bore her father, who was chiefly responsible for their departure from the conventional course. His philosophy of life, which he was fond of expounding, had earned for him the derisive title of "the Dorcaster sage."

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Some of his ideas were certainly startling. For instance, at the time the question of building a new church was raised, he maintained that the old one was plenty large enough for the congregation except when it was increased by the summer visitors, and as they came to Dorchester "for the air," services during their stay might be held in the woods behind the church. Of course this plan was not considered for a moment, and a large "edifice," which the summer visitors ungratefully called "a nightmare of architecture," took the place of the pleasant old meeting-house. It had a mortgage upon it of a size to correspond, and to help pay it off the adjoining woods, that had been so useful for Sunday-school picnics and other festivities, were cut down. In winter the congregation that used to fill the old church comfortably felt lonesome and cold in the new one; for it was difficult

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to heat the superfluous space. Still, no one regretted that Israel Croft's advice had not been taken and Dorcaster made the laughing stock of all the country round-about.

Although his forbears had always been called upon to serve the town in an official capacity, owing to his eccentricity his townsmen never dared appoint him to any office, and it was only in his own household that he could carry out the ideas which seemed to him so practical and good, and to his fellows so absurd.

The consciousness of the family reputation made Thea more reserved than nature intended. She was inclined to let others make all advances, and with Amy Carew, more than with any other girl, she felt ill at ease. She was far more conscious of the disparity between them than Amy could be.

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From all this it must not be inferred that Thea was unhappy. Her home life was too pleasant for that. The Crofts were a united family, and Thea's two brothers were never tired of devising ways of pleasing her. Moreover she was one of the girls who have plenty of resources within themselves, and are never at a loss for the means of enjoyment. She could make even her tasks enjoyable; for unlimited idling was no part of the family programme. In fact, one of Israel Croft's pet theories was that manual work, even so-called coarse work, helps to refine the character, and that a luxurious life leads to a lack of sympathy, giving a daintiness that comes between one and humanity. He taught his daughter, as his sons, that no necessary work could be beneath them.

Such ideas were far away from any thought of Amy Carew's. No doubt, if

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she were asked if she did not consider all work honorable, she would answer in the affirmative, but the rougher sort of labor she felt to be honorable only in people of a low social class. For this reason, when she came to the Croft farm one day to give an invitation to Thea, and found her occupied in cleaning out the colt's stall, she was not only shocked, but, as Thea instantly guessed, in spite of her affability, much disgusted.

As she first caught sight of her visitor Thea's color deepened, and her first impulse was to cast away the broom she was using, but on second thought she went forward with it in her hand. As she afterwards said, she and Amy made a fine tableau of "Velvet and homespun," for Amy was dressed in a daintily-made white dymity and a "picture hat." She wore around her neck a delicate little gold chain

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with a tiny locket, and under one arm she carried a small terrier with a long silky gray coat, adorned by a big orange bow; while Thea was dressed for her work and adorned only by wisps of hay in her hair and on her garments.

“Father and the boys are gone to ——,” she said, mentioning the county town, in explanation of her occupation, “and as they had to start very early in the morning, they left some of the chores for me.”

“Well, I should draw the line at cleaning out stalls,” said Amy. “It’s man’s work anyhow.”

“Yes, it is, if the man is round to do it,” Thea assented. “But I had only Ladylove’s stall to clean, and I don’t mind doing things for Ladylove. Come and see what a beauty she is!”

The colt, while her stall was being cleaned, was turned loose, and stood in the middle

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of the barn feeding herself from a pail of apples. Leading Amy up to her, Thea turned her first this way and then that, to show her handsome face and her glossy chestnut coat, meantime continuing her explanations.

“I offered to do *all* the chores, I was so anxious for father and the boys to get off early. Our old black Pete, who worked here so long, has got into trouble. By some mistake he has been put in jail, and they have gone to get him out. However, I’m nearly through now, and if you’ll wait just a few minutes we’ll amuse ourselves.”

“I’ve named my horse ‘Firefly,’” said Amy, sitting down on a mound of hay. “I thought it was very pretty, but Lady-love is even prettier.”

“Fanshawe names our animals, for before any one else can think of a good name he has the right one ready. That white horse

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over there he calls 'The Lily-maid of Astolat,' or Lily-maid for short. She has a very affectionate disposition, and when the great black horse that father raised with her was sold, the one called Launcelot, you know, she grieved herself almost to death. Fanshawe says that Mr. Tennyson wrote a poem about it, only he pretended that Lily-maid was a young woman and Launcelot a knight."

"In the poem I believe the Lily-maid died," Amy said reflectively; "they mostly do, in poetry."

"Well, the *real* Lily-maid didn't die," her friend declared, looking at the white mare. "Father is too good a horse doctor for that."

"What's the name of the horse in the next stall?" asked Amy, pointing to an old rackabone beast.

"That one is almost fifty years old, and

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is called the Orahippus," her friend replied, going back to her task. "The orahippus, you see, is the ancestor of the horse. Fanshawe says so, anyhow, but he is so fond of quizzing you can't really tell. And the big gray horse in the box stall is named Tricksy. She's the one Dave drives, and he thinks she is wonderfully intelligent because she has learned so many tricks. But you can teach any horse tricks if you love him and are kind. Ladylove knows a lot."

"Oh, make her do some of them," cried Amy, jumping up.

Thea threw down her broom and came out of the stall. She began to pat the glossy neck of her favorite, and to talk to her to get her into a good humor, as she said.

"Come then, sweetheart," she crooned at last. "Show the lady how you look when you feel sentimental."

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Instantly Ladylove turned her head on one side and looked out of the corner of her eyes with so languishing an expression that Amy laughed outright.

“Now, sweetheart, let us have a dance,” cried Thea.

As she spoke, she picked up her skirts and began to take dance-steps in front of the colt, who, in the daintiest fashion, stepping forward and back, followed her the whole length of the barn. Here the one made a curtsy, the other a bow, and then, treading the same measure, they came back to the starting-point. It was prettily done, in no workaday spirit on the part of the colt, and Thea, thinking only of showing off her favorite, had the charm of utter self-unconsciousness, moving with the languorous grace of a swaying pine branch.

Several other tricks followed, then the show-woman said: —

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“Oh, she is tired now; it is time to rest,” whereupon Ladylove nodded drowsily and laid her head on Thea’s shoulder.

It seemed to Amy that there was a mysterious link between the two, so responsive was the horse to the girl’s wish. Was the mysterious link only love, as Thea believed? Amy had noticed that when Thea looked into Ladylove’s eyes it was with a gentle, calm, and expectant gaze, and that her voice, instead of being loud and peremptory, was hardly above a whisper.

“Does Firefly know any tricks?” asked Thea, who was now feeding Ladylove with apples.

“One; he carries me round wherever I wish to go,” was the answer. “That’s a pretty good trick I think. But you really ought to exhibit the colt. You could make money.”

Amy now bethought her of the errands

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to the village which she was to attend to for her mother, and delivered her invitation.

Remembering her last visit to Lynwood, which was a distinctly disagreeable experience, Thea seized the first excuse that offered itself.

“Mother is going to clean house to-morrow and will need me, so I can’t go.”

Amy’s face showed a genuine disappointment. Her fondness for her old playfellow had been steadily reviving; for in truth, when herself, there was something magnetic about Thea.

“Well, it must be some other day then,” she insisted. “It can’t be any day this week though, for I have an engagement for each one, and next week I’m going to the seashore with mamma, but as soon as I come back we must set a day.”

“Oh, yes, I’ll come some day,” Thea hastily interposed; for some day, with its

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hundred and one chances for escape, seems just made for the fulfilment of disagreeable promises.

“Still, I’d much rather have you to-morrow, for I’m going to be alone, except for Rand. He is sick and grumpy and stays by himself all the time.” Rand was Amy’s only brother. “Mamma is going away, and Miss Brown, my new governess, is having her vacation. There are some lovely new flowers in the conservatory that you will like to see, we can play golf if it isn’t too hot, and if it is we can have a ride in the automobile. Then I’m to order the luncheon myself, so we can have just the things girls like.”

“It’s too bad I can’t come,” said Thea cheerfully.

“If I explained how things are, I believe your mother would let you off, she’s so sweet,” Amy exclaimed.

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"Oh, even if she would, I shouldn't be happy to go and leave her to do everything herself," Thea expostulated.

But already Amy had started for the house, her white dress held out by the breeze like a sail aslant as she ran, the terrier under her arm barking furiously.

Thea watched her with gloom.

"Mother will be sure to let me go. She'll think I want to," she said to herself, as she turned away to finish her task. "I wish with all my heart she was one of those horrid stern parents we read of, who believe in all work and no play and never want their children to enjoy themselves."

As she anticipated, Amy gained her point and returned triumphant. She and Mrs. Croft had arranged that Thea was to go to Lynwood at eleven o'clock the next morning.

As her work at the barn was done, Thea

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accompanied her friend to the gate, where her horse was hitched, and watched the gay little trap drive away. When it was quite out of sight she flung herself in a dejected heap on one of the side seats of the porch, where her mother was sitting with her sewing. The porch was very pleasant, bowered by honeysuckle, and shaded by two old cherry trees. The bees humming in the honeysuckle and the sound made by Ladylove cropping the clover in the dooryard — for she had the range of the place and had followed her mistress from the barn — alone broke the country stillness. Presently, however, Mrs. Croft raised her eyes and noticed how unusually depressed were the corners of Thea's lips.

"I don't want to go to Lynwood to-morrow," she answered when questioned as to the cause of her dismal face.

"That's odd!" her mother exclaimed.

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“You aren’t a bit like me, for when I was your age I should have been delighted with an invitation to a fine place like that.”

Mrs. Croft was a pretty woman with light hair that waved naturally over a very white and serene forehead. She had blue eyes, gentle and sweet in expression, and she must have been very attractive at that age when she so liked to accept invitations. In disposition she was very sympathetic, for she always assumed the expression of the person who was speaking to her, and in a room full of people engaged in lively conversation one might get a very fair notion of the aspect of the speakers, in dissolving views, as it were, without turning one’s eyes from Mrs. Croft’s face. Although not a talker herself, of course, she never had the feeling of being left out.

“If I had only known that you don’t wish to go,” she said with the corners of

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her own lips turned down, "I could easily have made Amy some excuse, but now it seems as if you would have to go. I told her that I should get Molly Miggs to help me, and you could go as well as not."

"Perhaps Molly can't come," suggested Thea, brightening.

Mrs. Croft also brightened. "You go and find out, and if she can't come, we'll send word right away to Amy."

Thea, who was a strong, well-made girl, accustomed all her life to horses, called Ladylove, and sprang upon her back. With neither bridle nor saddle she rode gayly away, while her mother, her head on one side, watched her with an admiring smile, thinking with maternal partiality that she made a far more attractive picture than Amy Carew in her stylish turnout.

On her return Thea jumped off the colt by the pasture, sending her in to graze,

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and walking the rest of the way to the house. By her dispirited air her mother knew that Molly had promised to come.

“People always *can* come if you don’t want them to, and they never can if you do,” she said; “though that doesn’t seem to be Amy’s experience with me — that is, if she really wants me — does it?”

“Of course she really wants you,” said her mother. “Nobody could be more eager than she was about it. Amy is a dear, sincere friend and I’d go, if I were in your place, and have a real good time.”

“Yes, you would. You would be so busy admiring Amy and all her beautiful things you would never know whether she despised you and yours or not; but I shall be miserable and awkward and disgusted. Oh, mother; can’t you help me to find an excuse to stay at home?”

Such depths of agony as Thea’s tone

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denoted, even if the cause was disproportionate, would move a heart of stone, and Mrs. Croft's heart, especially where her children were concerned, was by no means of that character.

"I wish I could," she said in a self-reproachful tone, "but I always was stupid in such ways, darling."

"Teasing people to visit you is what is stupid," Thea broke out. "If a person makes an excuse — *any* excuse, no matter how silly — it should be enough. It shows that for some reason she doesn't want to go. People can't always give the real reason."

"That sounds just like your father. To be urged always annoys him. Now I do like a real pressing invitation."

Mrs. Croft folded up her work and went into the house. Her daughter suspected that she was going to see that the dress

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she would wear to Lynwood was in order. Thea's best that summer was a pale-hued muslin, in which, on her way to church or some rural festivity, she felt very elegantly dressed, but which didn't seem quite right by the side of Amy's fine plumage.

For a moment she wondered if there were not some way, even yet, by which she might change the programme for to-morrow. But the day was too good to be wasted, and with the reflection that one tiresome day was enough, she drove the whole matter from her mind.

From an upper window Mrs. Croft listened to the gay song with which she beguiled herself as she weeded the little flower bed by the kitchen door, and concluded that the prospect of spending the day with Amy was not so distressing to her as had at first appeared.

CHAPTER III

THE Croft family had a fancy for eating their meals in the open air, and were assembled for supper that evening in their vast dining-room — a lovely pine wood covering several acres. These woods, in fact, which were but a stone's throw from the house, had served Thea and her brothers for nursery, parlor, and bedrooms too, and they had, as birds and butterflies are said to take on the colors of their favorite haunts, what some one once called a *piny* look. Perhaps none of them had this piny look quite so distinctly as Thea. For her long-lashed eyes had the lucent, gray-green tone, the soft depths and flickering lights of these mystic groves, and her hair was dusky with glints of light. She

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had caught the grace of their slowly-swaying branches, and those in trouble found in her presence a balm without words; for there was little of the magpie about Thea.

She sat in a little niche made by the projecting roots of a mammoth pine and held a blue and white bowl in her lap. The family supper consisted of bread and milk, their hardy lives making it seem more delicious than the most luxurious fare to the jaded appetite of the epicure; and then it required no preparation or long, odious after-task of dish-washing.

Near her sat Dave, her oldest brother, a young giant with an absurdly gentle voice which he had inherited from his mother. By his side was a can of milk from which, from time to time, he replenished her bowl or his own.

Directly opposite this pair sat Fanshawe, the second son, at the feet of his mother,

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who occupied the only chair, and near by, with his back to a tree, sat the husband and father. With his bald crown and silvery beard, he looked like an old patriarch. He had a humorous and kindly face, with soft, brown, benevolent eyes under bushy eyebrows. A radiance of health was about him and his appetite equalled that of either of his boys.

Long, pulsing rays were cast by the setting sun into the purple gloom of the grove, playing around the little circle. The evening breeze made harps of the pines; chickadees and warblers fluttered about in the trees, waiting to descend upon the banquet table when the feasters should be gone. The tu-la-lee of a thrush floated through the aisles of the grove, the rich, liquid notes seeming like the mellow, palpitating evening air made audible. A gray squirrel, an old friend of the family, sat

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with his tail-plume over his head in the middle of the circle, as a hint that nuts were in order.

Having taken the edge off his appetite, Fanshawe looked over at his sister and nodded approvingly.

"That's a fine pose you've taken. I wish I had my sketch book along."

"I'm glad you haven't," said their mother, first imitating her son's approving nod, and then her daughter's pout. "It's a pity if she can't even eat her supper in peace."

"Well, she shouldn't be so sketchable. She shouldn't have such a Romany grace," cried Fanshawe, who had a taste for art and had spent the winter working hard in an art school in New York. "But me-seems our fairy wears a melancholy countenance this evening," he went on in a bantering tone, having looked at her more

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closely. "Can it be that the fairy prince failed to meet her in the trysting place to-day?"

"No, Fan, that's not the trouble," answered Mrs. Croft, who was wont to take his nonsense literally. "She has been invited by Amy to spend the day at Lynwood and she doesn't want to go."

"Why not?" asked her father, reaching a long arm toward the basket of bread near his wife. "I thought the lass was her heart's dearest. I thought the two were inseparable."

"That's long past, Dad," said the quiet but observant Davy, flipping a nut toward his squirrelship.

"Does the fair Amy give herself airs?" inquired Fanshawe with interest. "Does she try to patronize you? Ha, she's a bold mortal indeed who insults a fairy."

"Is she cock-o'-the-walk, like her

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brother?" asked Dave, chuckling to himself with the recollection of a droll adventure he had had with young Randall Carew. One sloppy March day while walking beside his team through the village, with his head in the clouds, he heard some one cry sharply: "Look out, you moony hayseed! If *you* like mud baths, I *don't*." Repartee was not in Dave's line. He gave one look at the dapper little fellow, so besplashed as to excuse some irritation on his part, who was adjusting his eyeglasses and looking at him with an insufferably supercilious expression, then, coolly picking him up, Dave carried him under his arm, as a nurse does a two-year-old, across the muddy street and set him down on the opposite sidewalk. Still without a word he went back to his team while the other, followed by the jeers of the bystanders, also went on his way.

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Thea sat silent, playing with her spoon, not knowing just how to answer her father.

"I feel as if, somehow, we were so different," she said at last; "as if we were as far apart as the poles, and never could come anywhere near each other again."

"I shouldn't want to feel that way toward any human critter," he said, slowly shaking his head, and her mother also slowly shook her head. "Does the fine house and all the fal-lals get between you and your old playmate, little daughter?"

"Maybe they do, father."

"And no great wonder either!" cried Fanshawe. "Such people as the Carews seem half-buried by their *things*. You can't really get at 'em sometimes. I've felt as Thea does myself before now."

"Then your humanity is weak, boy, but I own it's harder to feel your brotherhood to the rich than to the poor. Still it's our

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fault if we let ourselves be fooled by external evidence — by mere stuff. The difference between us, we know, is only on the outside. Deep below the showy surface is the same old human heart a-beating.”

“That’s so. Dad’s right,” said Dave, refilling Thea’s bowl. But Thea did not hear him.

“Our brotherhood to the rich!” she was saying to herself. Somehow this relationship she had never thought of, yet, of course, Amy was her sister in the same deep sense that poor Katy Ryan was. The bond Dr. Derby had spoken of in the library must include all, even those who have themselves forgotten or wish to forget it.

At this moment, as if summoned by her thought, the doctor came into the woods. He had come to see about a horse, for the Croft horses had a reputation and the doc-

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tor needed a good one. He came forward with an unusually beaming face, as if enchanted by this gypsying.

“Oh, don’t rise — don’t rise,” he exclaimed, “or I shall feel that I ought to have waited at the stable, and then I should have lost this charming sylvan scene.”

“But now you are here you must certainly have supper with us,” said Mrs. Croft, whose hospitality was never made lukewarm by a consciousness of the irregularity of their way of life.

“I don’t often have an invitation to a gypsy supper, madam. Of course I’ll stay,” he said, sitting down beside Thea.

While he was being supplied with the frugal fare that made up their meal, he said to Mr. Croft: —

“I saw a horse at the stable that just took my fancy, — a chestnut mare with a most intelligent face.”

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"*Ladylove!*" cried Thea with an imploring look at her father.

"That's the family pet. You'll be asking me to sell you my girl next," he answered.

"Well, I'd be willing to take her," the doctor said coolly, putting his great arm around Thea, and giving her a bear's hug. "I'd make a nurse of her. She has brains and a heart, and that's just what's needed for nursing."

"A *nurse*, shut up in a sick room!" cried Fanshawe in disgust, "when any sensible, good-hearted old guy would do as well! I guess not."

"Fan thinks Thea was created for him to paint," said Dave; "but, Doctor, instead of nursing the sick, couldn't she do better by showing people how to be well."

"There's something in that," the doctor admitted, holding out his bowl for more

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milk. "This is truly Arcadian, Croft. I haven't eaten bread and milk before for years and I had completely forgotten how good it tastes."

"I don't know about its being Arcadian, but, anyhow, it's a good, cleanly, easily-got meal. But that last is anything but a recommendation to most folks, who think the more trouble they take with their food, the more chopping and beating and straining and frizzling and frying—especially frying—is done to it, the better it is. Of the appetite they bring to it and the sort of stomach they have to digest it they don't give a thought."

The doctor laughed.

"I've heard, Croft, about some of your hobbies. They say you never eat anything but mush on Thanksgiving day."

"Well, it's gospel truth. The rest of the family have what they want, but I made a vow I'd never eat anything but mush on

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Thanksgiving day and I've kept it. If you want to know why, I'll tell you."

He set his bowl down and made himself comfortable, leaning against the trunk of the tree. The sunlight flickered on his white beard, and a pleasant light shone in his eyes. Evidently he was pleased with this opportunity to tell the story.

"To begin with there has always been a rover in every family of Croft, and I took to the sea. On my last voyage I was wrecked and I lived for three years with savages on one of the South Sea Islands. 'The benighted savages' some folks call 'em, and I don't deny they have some mighty unpleasant ways, but they taught me a thing or two the civilized races haven't seemed to catch on to. For instance, they made me realize what a terrible hard time we folks in civilization make of living. They were a standing revelation to me of

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what Nature will do for us if we'll only just let her. I hadn't an idea that such a sound state of health and such endurance as these savages enjoy are possible. So when, at last, I was picked up by a ship bound for New York I made up my mind that when I got home (for I'd had my fill of seafaring) I'd settle down to farming and show my neighbors the foolishness of wearin' oneself out in getting things nature has no need of. Martha," here he nodded at his wife, "had promised to marry me when I should come back from that last voyage, and I thought that I'd been away so long there would be no sense in waiting more'n a week at the outside. But when I got home I found her all worn out keeping house for her father and four hulks of boys. Why, the girl had had the life stewed out of her in a hot kitchen making rich messes for that old man, who ought to have

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known better than to insult his stomach with 'em."

"Israel," warned his wife, "you sha'n't say anything against father. He was a good, kind man."

The story-teller stopped for a moment, and swallowed hard, then he said: —

"So he was, my dear, but anyhow he was mighty set on his creature comforts. Well, Doctor, it was just before Thanksgiving day that I got back to civilization, and all the women in Dorcaster were preparing to give thanks in the usual fashion — by gorging and getting folks' stomachs out of order. The upshot of it is that when our wedding day came my girl was flat on her back, — a case of nervous prostration that kept me out of paradise for a year. *That* was the time I made my vow that I would never eat anything but mush on Thanksgiving day."

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“And it tastes good, I dare say,” chuckled the doctor.

“It does. As a general thing I’m not hankering for Indian meal mush, but on that day, I tell you, it’s like ambrosia to me.”

“Hmm; I suppose your neighbors have by now been converted to a more healthy way of life,” said the doctor wickedly, stroking his beard.

The Dorcaster sage shot him a lightning glance. “You know better. They think fresh air was made to take cold in, and that the only question to ask about an article of food is, if it pleases the palate.”

The doctor rose, for he had long since finished his supper and when his errand was done he had visits to make. Mr. Croft led the way to the stable, the others following with the baskets and cans.

Mrs. Croft, whose motherly heart had

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been moved within her by the suffering of Katy Ryan, took this opportunity to inquire for her.

“We all want to do something for that poor child,” she said, “and Thea has been wondering if she might go and read to her.”

The doctor’s face broadened into its most genial smile. His little homily in the library had resulted in a good many such offers, but in this case, as in others, he was forced to reply that Katy was not yet in a condition to receive visitors.

“However, one thing I’ll tell you,” he added, “I’d trust her to Sister Theodora sooner than to any other girl in Dorchester.”

“My daughter’s name is Dorothea,” her mother corrected him.

“But,” said the doctor in a cool way he had, “I call her Sister Theodora after a nurse I once knew. A true sister she was

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to the whole human race, though she didn't belong to any order."

Thea colored with pleasure and from that moment looked eagerly forward to the time when she might perhaps comfort a little this poor child whose crippled state seemed so forlorn in contrast to her own glorious health and energy.

As the doctor got into his buggy, a few moments later, he said: —

"Well, Croft, though I laughed at it, I glory in your independence. It's a refreshing spectacle to see a man carry out his own ideas in the face of the community."

"The community, pooh!" cried the sage, snapping his fingers. "What should I care for the silly talk of silly people? I know I'm right, for I've seen my wife grow from a spindling, sickly girl into a fine hearty woman, and you can't match my brood in Dorcaster. I tell you I never cared a con-

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tinental what folks said till my baby-girl got old enough to be unhappy sometimes because her father was called a crank. It takes a little rosebud daughter to show a man how soft he can be. Not that I shall ever give up. I won't, for I know I'm right."

"No, don't give up," said the doctor, gathering up his reins, a little surprised at the distress on the patriarchal face. "Don't give up, for the girl is of the right sort, and she'll come out on your side in the end."

CHAPTER IV

WHEN Thea started for Lynwood the next morning she was almost reconciled to her fate. The day was so beautiful that the eyes were charmed, and the aromatic odors of pine trees and cedars, of bayberry, sweet-fern, and other plants, whose fainter perfume lent an unrecognized sweetness to the summer morning, made it a delight just to breathe. And she was eager to prove that, after all, the pretty, foolish things with which Amy was surrounded had not really weakened, as she had thought, the bond between them. At first the sumptuousness of this home, different from anything to which she was accustomed, oppressed her, but Amy received her cordially, enabling her to lapse into a

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comfortable unconsciousness of her elegant surroundings.

On former visits to Lynwood, Amy had always taken her into the library, but now, as she stopped involuntarily at the door of that room, her friend seized her arm, saying: —

“Don’t go in! Rand is in there and he’s cross as a bear to-day. He has nervous prostration, and the doctors say he mustn’t enter college this autumn as he expected.”

As she stood in the doorway Thea caught a glimpse of Amy’s brother, sitting with his head in his hands, his elbows on the library table, staring at the books, on their shelves along the wall, that he had been forbidden to read. He looked so miserable that Thea’s heart had given a great throb of pity. His eyes looked hungry like those of a starving dog that she once saw staring into the window of a meat-shop. She had

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gone into the shop and begged some old scraps of meat and fed the dog, and now the desire was as strong within her to help Rand reach the books he longed for.

"He's awfully disappointed, I suppose," she said, as she followed Amy upstairs. "I know that he is very clever."

"Yes, he's clever," his sister assented, "and he doesn't let you forget it. He was prepared for college two years ago, but he had to wait till he reached the proper age before he could enter, and now he has reached the proper age he can't go, after all, on account of his health."

Amy ended with a giggle that sounded unsympathetic; for she and Rand did not get on very well together. If she had had no more patience with that imaginary kidnapped and then restored brother, in whose reformation after the doctor's method she felt she could effect so much, it is to be

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feared her success would not have been very great. But Amy would probably have said that it would be easier for her to bear with the ignorance of the one than with the conceit and superiority of the other; and no one, who knew him, could deny that Randall Carew was conceited.

Amy took Thea into her own room, a large, sunny one, which, when she last saw it, looked like a nursery. In the mean time it had been refitted in a way to please a young girl's taste, and as she entered Thea gave an exclamation of surprise.

"Oh, I'd forgotten you hadn't seen my room since it was refurnished. Don't you like it?" asked Amy.

Of course Thea liked it. What girl does not like pretty furniture, dainty toilet articles, and window draperies?

"It is a beautiful room," she answered. "My room has been refurnished, too, and

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the next time you come to see me I must show it to you. This one looks just like you, Amy. Mine is quite different."

"And it looks just like you, I suppose," said Amy with her little laugh, privately thinking that any room in the Croft house would necessarily be very different from hers.

"I think it should look more like Dave and Fanshawe," Thea answered, "for it was they who arranged everything, as a surprise on my birthday, you know."

"Mine was done for *my* birthday, but you may be sure Rand didn't take any interest in it," Amy said. "But now come into the toy room and we'll choose things to send to poor Katy Ryan."

"Oh, yes, I should enjoy that of all things," Thea exclaimed, following Amy into the smaller room and looking with delight at toys of all kinds that were in

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boxes or ranged on shelves around the room.

“We will take turns in choosing,” Amy said, “and as you are company you shall begin.”

“Can I choose *anything*, Amy?”

“Yes, anything that is here. I don’t play with them any more, and mamma will be glad to get them out of the house. Choose —”

“Well, I’m going to choose something that isn’t just a toy, — something you might use.” Thea spoke with a good deal of hesitation.

“Don’t be so terribly bashful,” her friend urged; “go ahead and choose!”

“I choose that paint box,” cried Thea, thus encouraged. “It’s a splendid big one with lots of colors, and when Katy can sit up I should think she might enjoy coloring pictures. She isn’t so old as we are.”

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“Here it goes then,” said Amy, who had cleared a utility box as a receptacle for the presents, and she deposited in it Thea’s choice. “I’ve a new paint box, the sort that artists use, for Miss Brown is teaching me to paint flowers, and I’m sure I don’t want this. I’m going to choose this big doll. I used to love it when I played with dolls. It has lots of clothes, and I believe Katy would like it.”

“I’m sure of that,” Thea assented. “Oh, I choose next that box of queer things you wind up and set going round the room. I remember them just as well, and how we used to laugh over them.”

“So do I,” said her friend, taking the box from the shelf and looking in it. “Don’t you remember this duck that waddles off so exactly like Miss Krautler, that German governess I had, stopping every now and then to quack at me? I haven’t

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thought of these things for years. Let's wind some of them up!"

Forgetting the dignity befitting their superior years, the one-time playfellows sat down on the floor and amused themselves with the toys. They had been sent to Amy from Paris and were very clever. Besides being comical in themselves, they had droll associations and each one, as it was set going, was received with shouts of laughter. As the last one stopped, however, Amy jumped up, saying in an apologetic way, as if she had been greatly bored: —

"Well, that's done. We know now they are in perfect order. It's my turn to choose."

An hour or so was occupied very agreeably in this way and, as the two girls stood looking at the collection in the utility box, Thea cried with fervor: —

"How lovely it is to be able to send

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Katy all these things! I think Dr. Derby has chosen just the right name for you — Lady Bountiful!”

Amy smiled, for she had been greatly pleased by this nickname.

“When I am really grown up, I shall give a great deal of money in charity. I shall always be doing something like sending poor boys to college — the smart ones, you know — or sick people to the South — *poor*, sick people, of course — or buying cottages for people who have lost their homes, so that I shall be looked upon as a benefactor in every house in Dorcaster. There’s that poor old maid in the village who has almost lost her eyesight sewing. I would give her enough money to make her perfectly comfortable without doing a thing and —”

“Do you mean Miss Emily Larkum?” cried Thea. “Why, she is as proud as Luci-

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fer, and wouldn't take a bushel of potatoes from her oldest neighbor!"

"Well, if she is so terribly independent, there are plenty that aren't," Amy rejoined. "Do you believe that poor Jimmy Bowers that's lost his father and mother and has to sell papers on the trains wouldn't like to be educated and have a good chance?"

"I think he'd like a good chance, all right," Thea answered guardedly, "and, of course, Amy, there are plenty of people that would let you help them; and I think it would be perfectly lovely to do it. I'd like to be a Lady Bountiful myself."

"There's plenty of room for two," said Amy gayly, but Thea objected: —

"It takes money for that."

"Dr. Derby always calls you Sister Theodora — he has to have a name, it seems, for every one — because you are like a nurse he used to know by that name."

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Amy paused, recalling the fact that the doctor had added that this nurse was the most beautiful woman he had ever known. She had wondered at the time if he really meant it, and now she took a long look at Dorothea in her country-made best gown, and concluded he had been in jest. "You might be a nurse," she went on, "but I wouldn't be one, for sick people are kind of disgusting, and a nurse has to do so many disagreeable things."

Thea shook her head.

"No, I'm going to stay at home and help father on the farm. Neither of the boys like farming. Dave is wild to go on exploring expeditions. Although he is so quiet, he loves adventures. He likes to explore places where others have never been, to climb steep mountains, and look into volcanoes, and Fan is going to be an artist."

"I shouldn't think a girl of much use on

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a farm!" was Amy's comment, "and there are other things you could do better."

"Oh, it wouldn't be a story-book sort of life, of course. And I shouldn't be looked upon as a 'benefactor' as you would; but I know I could make things easier for father, and I could do a good many things for people between whiles, in a sisterly sort of way that would help a little."

The two girls went downstairs with their arms around each other, quite like old times, and Thea was thinking how much pleasure she would have missed by refusing Amy's invitation, when two of Amy's new acquaintances arrived. They were the daughters of a very rich man who had built a fine house a few miles from Lynwood, and were strangers to Thea. Apparently they wished to remain so, for, after the first greeting, they entirely ignored her. She hoped they would not stay long, but when

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they were invited to stay to luncheon they accepted.

Thea was seated at table between Randall and Honoria, while Annetta sat on the opposite side of the table between Randall and Amy. Rand only spoke when he was directly spoken to, which, however, was often, for there seemed to be no wish to ignore him; but the conversation went blithely, although on subjects of which Thea knew nothing. She, therefore, sat silent, feeling very awkward and outside the game.

These girls had the same air of extranice-ness that characterized Amy; as if they were particularly fine clay, or porcelain, giving her what she called the iron-kettle feeling. Their hands were soft and smooth, with polished nails, and their blue-veined wrists, decorated with bangles, were much smaller than her own. She thought them very dainty and pretty and would gladly

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have been friendly had they given her a chance.

Perhaps they did not consciously neglect her and were rude only from want of thought. As for Amy, she was too interested in other things to remember her duty as hostess. Honoria and Annetta were going to camp out in the Adirondacks and urged Amy, who knew all the girls of the party, to go too, and they talked only of these persons and of the trip.

Amy said that to camp out seemed to her to be the jolliest way to have a vacation, but that her mother had never been willing to let her go.

"Mamma is afraid I shall stray off by myself and get shot, and she thinks the woods are damp and full of snakes and poisonous things."

"The woods aren't damp in the Adirondacks," said Annetta. "We are going to

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sleep at night in tents. I think it will be *great*."

For the last minute Rand had been looking steadily at Thea. Now he said, turning to Honoria: —

"I see that Amy has forgotten to introduce you and your sister to our friend here."

The four girls informed him, in one voice, as it were, of his mistake, but he said quite coolly: —

"Well at all events the ceremony has not been properly performed." Then, with great solemnity, and with an emphasis that conveyed his meaning quite well, "Let me make you acquainted with Amy's oldest friend, Thea Croft."

There was an awkward silence after this, for it was very evident that he meant it as a rebuke for leaving Thea out of the conversation, then Honoria turned to her and asked: —

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"Did you ever camp out?"

Thea hesitated for a moment.

"Not in the Adirondacks," she finally replied, "but on lovely summer nights we always sleep out in the woods."

"What!" exclaimed three horrified treble voices, "you sleep out in the woods!"

"Yes," Thea reluctantly admitted, seeing that by her own confession she was out of it again.

"Didn't I understand you to say a moment ago that to sleep out of doors was *great*?" said Rand to Annetta.

"In a tent," she corrected.

"Well, I've tried both ways, and it's much nicer without the tent," Thea insisted. "For then you can see the stars twinkling between the pine-tops, and the great branches wave over you in such a lovely drowsy way, and you seem to belong to it all, just as the birds and the squirrels do."

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“That explains,” said Rand smiling, and the cross Rand had a very pleasant smile. It quite re-formed his moody face.

“Explains what?” demanded his sister.

“That balmy look she has,” he answered.

“Have I a balmy look?” asked Thea, with a laugh.

The three girls looked at her, but could not see what Rand meant.

As they rose, at last, from the table, Amy proposed golf. Annetta and Honoria were famous golfers, but Thea was obliged to confess that she had never played the game.

“I shouldn’t think any one would want to play golf in the middle of the day,” Rand cried, interrupting Amy, who was politely offering to teach Thea to play. “I’ll show her the new conservatory instead.”

“Oh, I thought you were the young man who considered it a bore to tote people

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round the place!" exclaimed Amy, forgetful of her manners at this interference, which gave her an odd number of players.

"I like to do something now and then for my kind, if *I'm not a Lady Bountiful*," Rand retorted, and then, as the three girls filed out of the room, he added in a voice intended only for Thea's ear, "especially for such a *nice* kind."

However, as he led her down the hall he said, looking longingly toward the library: —

"You don't really want to go to the conservatory, do you? It's hot there and 'twill make your head ache."

Thea had never in her life had a headache, but she did not want to go to the conservatory.

"No, we will go into the library instead, and get a book. I'll read to you out under the trees somewhere. That will be cooler than the conservatory."

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She saw an eager light spring into his eyes, but he said rudely, "I suppose, like all girls, you gabble so that it's impossible to understand a word you read; and, of course, you wouldn't like anything that I do."

Thea laughed. She was not at all offended, looking upon Rand as a poor, sick boy that should be humored.

"You shall choose the book yourself," she told him, "and I don't think I read too fast, for I often read to Fanshawe while he paints, and he has never complained of it."

"What do you read to him?" Rand inquired.

"Oh, different things! Poetry sometimes."

"Faugh. I loathe poetry."

As he spoke Rand took down a volume from the shelf, and choosing a verse at random, read in a mincing fashion:—

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“O Ringlet, O Ringlet,
She blushed a rosy red
When, Ringlet, O Ringlet,
She clipt you from her head;
And Ringlet, O Ringlet,
She gave you me and said:
‘Come kiss it, love, and put it by:
If this can change, why so can I.’
O fie, you golden nothing, fie;
You golden lie.”

“How sweet! how exquisite! how uplifting! That a full-grown man should listen to that spoony, sentimental, lovey-dovey stuff surpasses belief!”

“All poetry isn’t like that,” said Thea, flushing, “and even that wouldn’t be so *awfully* silly if you didn’t read it in such a silly way.”

“Glad you like it,” he ejaculated.

“I didn’t say I liked it.”

“But you implied as much. You implied that it would be good if I had read it in an appreciative way. Well, now, I’ll try again.”

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"I sha'n't listen, I sha'n't listen, I sha'n't listen!" cried Thea with her hands over her ears.

Rand closed the book with a snap. He suddenly realized that what he was doing was against the doctor's orders.

"Well, if you don't like that, select something that you and your brother do like."

Thea shook her head.

"Now, you are offended. You are offended because I laughed at one of your favorite poems."

"If I am offended, it is because you laughed at Fanshawe, as if he were 'spoony' and 'love-dovey' and sentimental. He *isn't*. He is just as manly as you are."

Rand stood still for a moment, looking at her.

"Well," he said at last, "I see you've got a temper like the rest of us. But I like you for standing up for your brother."

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Come now, you find something that you read to him and read it to me. However silly it may be, I won't laugh."

"Indeed, I won't," she answered, recovering her good nature. "You choose what you want yourself."

"I've just told you what I want."

"We're wasting all our time wrangling this way. Come, get your book. You may be sure I'm not going to read poetry to *you*."

He sat down by the table, leaning his elbows on it just as he had when she had passed the door with Amy and had so excited her pity!

"I suppose you have repented of your offer to read to me. It is stupid to read aloud. I never liked to do it, so I can't blame you."

By this time Thea was in despair. "After all," she said to herself, looking at his

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haggard face, "he is nothing but a poor sick boy and it's foolish to mind what he says. I'm going to treat him like a fretful baby."

She said aloud, in a soothing tone: —

"We'll both choose a book. If you *really* want me to, I'll read you a little thing Fan likes, and then I'll read in *your* book."

This sudden concession astonished Rand and perhaps shamed him, for, as he got his book, he said: —

"I hope I wasn't cross —"

"Oh no!" she interposed, but her eyes twinkled, and they both laughed.

"Yes, of course I *was* cross, but I can tell you it makes a fellow irritable to lay awake nights as I do lately. Everything gets on your nerves, and even when folks are trying to do you a kindness, you can't help snapping at them. Do you really think we had better go outside, or stay in here?"

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“Oh, we’ll go outside. I never stay in the house if I can get out of doors.”

“And I never go out of doors if I can stay in the house,” said Rand. However, he led the way to a cool place on the lawn where there were seats and a hammock under the trees.

Thea made him get into the hammock, and sat down beside it and opened her book.

It was a copy of Wordsworth, and she turned to the well-known poem called Lucy. She wasted no more time but began at once:—

“ Three years she grew in sun and shower,
Then Nature said, ‘A lovelier flower
On earth was never sown;
This child I to myself will take;
She shall be mine, and I will make
A lady of my own.’ ”

Thea had a very sweet, low voice and she read distinctly and well; for the Crofts



"SHE WASTED NO MORE TIME, BUT BEGAN AT ONCE."

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spent many winter evenings in reading, each member of the family circle taking a turn. She was so familiar with this poem, having read it often to please Fanshawe, who loved it, that she did it full justice. As she finished the last line she closed the book and opened Rand's, intending to give him no chance to make comments. It was difficult, however, to circumvent Rand if he had any such intention as this, and he called out: —

“Hold on! Hold on! Suppose you read again that third verse, — I *think* it's the third verse.”

Thea could not refuse, and finding the verse indicated, read it through: —

“She shall be sportive as the fawn
That, wild with glee, across the lawn
Or up the mountain springs;
And hers shall be the breathing balm,
And hers the silence and the calm
Of mute, insensate things.”

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“Ah yes, that’s it,” he murmured, looking at Thea, and repeating:—

“And hers shall be the breathing balm,
And hers the silence and the calm
Of mute, insensate things.”

“And now that other—‘And beauty born of murmuring sound.’” So Thea read:—

“The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her; and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty, born of murmuring sound,
Shall pass into her face.”

Whether he was really pleased with these exquisite lines, or wished to fix them in his mind to ridicule them on some future occasion, she could not guess. The truth is he thought they might have been written to describe Thea herself, and from that time forth he called her, in his own mind, “Nature’s Lady.”

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Rand's book was one of Francis Parkman's that he had been reading when he had suddenly broken down and study or reading forbidden. Thea insisted upon beginning where he had left off, and she knew by his grunts of approval that he was really enjoying himself. She kept on, therefore, with much zest, when it suddenly struck her that he was very quiet, and looking at him she discovered that he was sound asleep.

This seemed to her the best thing that could happen, and she kept very still, hoping he would sleep a long time, but in a few moments the loud chattering of the golf players, who were returning to the house, awoke him. He sat up in the hammock, and was rubbing his eyes in a bewildered way as the girls came up.

"Well, if that's your idea of entertaining

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a guest," cried his sister, "you had better have let Thea come with us."

"Oh, I do believe she has been reading poetry to him," said Honoria, opening the volume of poems which Thea had laid on a chair.

"It's no wonder he went to sleep," exclaimed Annetta, while all three burst into shouts of derisive laughter.

Thea felt rather silly and ashamed, although she had done nothing but try to amuse a fellow creature who had seemed dull and miserable. Rand, however, showed no chagrin and said, addressing Amy:—

"I've no doubt it seems strange to you that any girl should give up her own pleasure to please any one else, but that's what she has been doing. I'm selfish, too, but thank Heaven I can appreciate generosity in others, instead of considering it something to sneer at."

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The sound of approaching wheels put an end to an awkward moment.

“There’s our carriage,” said Annetta.

Rand got out of the hammock and helped them into the vehicle with rather exaggerated politeness. As they drove away, Amy said to Thea:—

“I’ve ordered the automobile. It will be cool riding. Will you come, Rand?”

“No, I’ll finish my nap if I can. It’s mighty queer that I should have fallen asleep when for the first time in weeks I was enjoying myself awake.”

Thea enjoyed the ride very much, and when at last she was set down at the Croft farm she had almost forgotten that anything unpleasant had occurred.

CHAPTER V

KATY RYAN opened her eyes on the lovely summer morning with her usual smile; for who could say that the new day would not bring her her heart's desire?

That her father had met his fate in the burned factory, as she had been told, Katy passionately refused to believe; and every morning she awakened in the hope that before the day was over she would look into his face once more. She was, therefore, always on the alert. Every footfall in the street, every jar of the house door, any excitement in the rooms below, sent the blood to her heart with the conviction that he had come. Especially in the early morning, when the dawn tinged the sky with its joyful rose-color, was she confident

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and cheerful. As the day waned, and her nerves ached with the long hours of pain, hope wavered a little, though this she never admitted, and the night with its complete disappointment brought a gloom that could only be lightened by thoughts of the morrow. This feverish longing and these repeated disappointments worked against her recovery, and yet it was so uncertain what might be the effect upon her if convinced that her father was dead, that one dared not discourage her.

So, as usual on waking she faced the new day bravely. It was going to be fine. The sun blazed gloriously into Katy's room and a fresh breeze tempered the June heat. For a moment she lay quite still, then turned to see if granny was in her bed on the opposite side of the room. It was empty, and the clatter and noise downstairs assured her that it was late.

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When Katy had been found injured by the falling timber about the burning factory, she had been carried to Mrs. Hooley, who lived in the house next to the one she and her father had occupied. The kind-hearted Irish woman had done the best she could for the child, not grudging the extra work she made, but granny thought it hard that she must share her room with a sick child. She had not the kind tact that made Mrs. Hooley such a pleasant companion, but was garrulous and a bit peevish, with a none too comfortable old age. It was granny who had told Katy of the cruel chance that she would be a cripple; and it was granny who only the night before had counselled her to give up all false hopes of ever again seeing her father in the flesh.

But that was the night before, when all the day-chances were over, and now it

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was morning again. She was looking unusually bright when Mrs. Hooley came up with her breakfast.

“Sure there do be a deal of kindness in the worrld,” said this cheerful nurse, setting down the tray to put another pillow behind Katy’s back. “There’s niver a day whin some wan of the village girrls doesn’t come to bring ye some token or other. First ’tis this, an’ thin that, till me shelves do be so occupied, I have to set the byes to clerrin’ ’em. This mornin’ ’twas, that wan came to the door wid this little pat o’ butter, wid a clover leaf stamped on’t an’ rale clover blossoms set loike a wreath around it. Look at it, Katy dear, an’ ’twill give ye a foine appetite. ’Twas the choild av that ould Croft, him they call a crank. Anny how she’s loovely intirely, let the ould man be what he may.

““An I’ve brought Katy this pat o’

butter,' she says, smilin' the heart out o' me, 'which I made wid me own two hands fer love av her.' Yis, '*fer the love av her,*' says she. 'An' how is she this beyewtiful mornin', Mrs. Hooley?' says she.

"Sure the sun at wanst began to shine brighter, hearin' her approval, a warm comfortin' cup-o'-tay sort o' feelin' stole over me, an' I make no doubt, Katy darlin', yer breakfast will taste better thin common."

So saying, the good creature settled the tray on Katy's lap, and for a moment stood in her favorite attitude with her hands on her hips, watching her spread a slice of bread with Thea's butter. The little invalid took a mouthful and nodded.

"Tastes loike clover too," said she.

Mrs. Hooley's broad face beamed.

"Well thin, darlin', it's good tidings I've got fur ye this foine mornin' —"

Instantly Katy dropped the bread and

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butter, into her white cheeks flashed a burning color, and she leaned forward, eagerly crying:—

“Oh, tell me, tell me quick. Is me feyther come?”

“Not that, Katy. Oh, it’s nothing loike that at all! Och, darlin’, don’t cry. Sure I wisht I’d bit off the runaway tongue av me before iver I spoke,” lamented poor Mrs. Hooley.

Katy did not cry. It was still morning. There was plenty of time before nightfall for her father to come. But her appetite was gone.

“Go on wid yer breakfast, an’ I’ll tell yer what I had in me moind to say,” urged her friend and nurse. “Ah, there’s the good girrl, take a bite more. Will, thin, ’tis a foine young leddy that’s comin’ this day ter take ye ridin’. Miss Carew it is. An’ Martin, he says she rides in a stylish

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little trap as iver ye saw. Her horse has a stump av a tail, av the fash'nable cut — loike a whisk broom — an' she has a long whip wid an illegant yaller bow on it that sinds him flyin' along the road like a birrd."

"Oh, I don't want to go with her," cried Katy.

"Not want to go. Sure ye must be out av yer moind —"

"Suppose me father should come the whilst."

"If he comes I'll kape him fer ye. Niver fear!"

"I — I'd be scart of the young leddy. Sure I wouldn't know what to say to an illegant young leddy loike that."

"It's the same wan that sint ye the box av prisints. 'Twould be no more'n perlite to mention each wan, an' that would be forty or more remarks ye'd be makin'. Thin ye know to each wan av yours, she'd make

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a remark in her turn. An' each remark she'd make on your remark would put ye in moind av anither remark, an' each toime ye replied 'twould be to set her goin' again, so that bimeby ye'd have to talk to wanst, the both av ye, payin' no attintion to the other, or ye'd have no chance to communicate yer ideas to each other at all. Yis, darlin', that's the way 'tis, whin two women or two girrls git together. Wid *min* an' byes, 'tis different. They do be a bit slow."

Katy was silent a moment as if considering the subject, then she slowly shook her head. Her experience did not include such talking-matches.

"I don't want'er go," she said.

"It's fer the sake av yer health thin, darlin'. 'Twas the dochter himself that arranged it wid Miss Carew. An' sure if yer feyther was to see ye so pale an' peaked, 'twould make the heart av him sore. Go

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thin, Katy, an' fer the same raison, eat a bite more."

"There's Johnny in the entry," said Katy. "Let *him* eat my breakfast."

Hearing himself mentioned in this agreeable connection, Mrs. Hooley's youngest son came into the room.

"For shame on ye," cried his mother, "iver ready to stuff yerself loike a pig! Now go downstairs an' lave Katy to eat her breakfast in peace, fer she's got a date wid a young lady an' must be ready at ileven o'clock."

"Martin an' Tim are out here too," whined Johnny. "They are waitin' fer some av Katy's breakfast too."

Mrs. Hooley closed the door with a hasty hand, her person against it precluding the possibility of opening it.

"Don't want her old breakfast," cried the voice of Martin, the eldest and the

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sauciest of Mrs. Hooley's spoilt children. "I've got some flowers that a girl jest left here fer Katy. I'll go down an' tell her yer wouldn't let me give 'em to her, but told me to fro 'em inter the ash barrel."

At this the door was immediately opened and Martin advanced, his arms full of flowers and his eyes fixed plaintively upon the breakfast tray.

"What an illegant dishplay!" cried his mother. "Go down an' bring up all the pitchers yer can find, me swate bye, an' we'll make the room foine. Look at these blue wans, Katy! I've seen these in the auld country. Leastwise they were of a different color, but av the same make. Flowers do make a place look so dressy. I wisht we could raise 'em out in the yard."

When the flowers were disposed of, Mrs. Hooley gave her attention to Katy's wardrobe. The poor child had nothing fit to

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wear upon such an occasion, but Pleasant Corner people had no haughty objections to be seen in borrowed plumes.

Katy's outfit was collected from three houses, and for this reason, perhaps, when, punctually at the appointed hour, Amy drove up to the Hooley door, Katy was not ready.

The boys rushing up from below began to pound excitedly on the door of the invalid's room, much flustering Mrs. Hooley, whose fingers were all thumbs as she tried to put the last touches to Katy's toilet.

"Hurry up, mother. Hurry," cried Martin. "The young leddy is here waitin'! Oh my, isn't she the dasher though!"

"Well, you go tell her that Katy's comin' at wanst," said his mother, opening the door. "Yer stay an' talk so she won't be mindin' the delay. Hold on, an' let me see if yer dacent. Holy Virgin, what a

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head! An'” — with deep disgust — “*you’ve a crumb on yer chin!*”

“Well, d’ye want it?” he asked, cocking his saucy head at her and then scampering away to escape her avenging hand.

With the help of the whole Hooley family, Katy was placed at last beside Amy in the carriage, a crowd of sympathetic neighbors looking on. An odd figure she made, in a red knitted shoulder cape, a purple skirt belonging to granny’s palmy days, and the most stylish hat to be found in the neighborhood — a white chip with a splashing satin bow and further adorned by a white ostrich feather which sprang up defiantly on one side and then drooped over the wearer’s ear, the property of a dressy Polish girl, Anna Cominsky by name; but as she raised her great velvety eyes to Amy’s — eyes that said, “*I am your little sister — your little*

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sister who suffers — be faithful to me,” Amy forgot her astonishing attire.

Amy was playing Lady Bountiful very prettily that day. She was full of pity for Katy and ardently wished to give her pleasure. She meant to be tactful and kind, but her first venture at conversation was unfortunate.

Her fastidious eye was naturally offended by Pleasant Corner — the name in this instance, as usual, seemed to have been given in derision — and the Hooley establishment in particular with its undeniably untidy air made an unpleasant impression upon her.

“Mrs. Hooley seems like a nice kind woman,” she said, “but I should think you would rather have gone to the hospital, as Dr. Derby wished.”

In the opinion of Pleasant Cornerites to be taken to a hospital stood for the cruelest

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stroke of fate. Katy had heard of persons being carried there against their will, and she jumped to the conclusion that this ride was a ruse of the doctor's to carry out his wish. For a moment she was half paralyzed by fright, then seeing old "Gran'fer" Quinn sitting on the steps of the grocery shop, she called frantically to him for help.

Much frightened, Amy drew Firefly up with a jerk.

"What's the matter? Are you faint? Have you dropped something out?" she cried.

"Oh, Gran'fer, Gran'fer, help!" wailed Katy.

But "Gran'fer" was stupid with long years of hard work. His jaw fell, and he sat still, staring at Katy with no idea as it seemed of going to the rescue.

"Help! Help!" she screamed; and this time her voice brought a woman from

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inside the shop, with two boys at her heels.

The woman was a newcomer at Pleasant Corner. Katy had never seen her before, but she was of her own class and she trusted her.

“Oh, take me out,” she cried; “this wan is takin’ me off to the hospital. Help!”

“Why, no, I’m not,” asserted the astonished Amy. “I’m just taking her out for a drive. Why, there isn’t any hospital for miles and miles.”

“That’s right. She ain’t likely to ride inter Bosting. I guess she’ll think yer haven’t any manners to act like this,” said the woman.

Katy, however, was already convinced of the folly of her behavior, and looked shamefacedly at her companion, who, seeing that confidence was restored, touched up Firefly and went on.

This unpleasant incident completely

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spoiled the enjoyment Katy was beginning to take in the fresh air and the escape from her prison-chamber. For a moment neither spoke; then Amy made an effort to set the poor little thing at ease.

The sudden halt had jerked the Polish girl's hat to the back of Katy's little head, which made it look even more rakish than before, and Amy took the reins in one hand while trying to straighten it with the other.

"It's a little too big," she said graciously. "I think one of my hats would fit you better, and I know mamma will let me give you one. Which color would you like best?"

"Oh, anny color — navvy blue or rid," said Katy. "But sure I don't want no hat whin I pass the time in me bed."

This effort at conversation was the last that she made for a long time, but when Amy was almost in despair the sight of

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a beautiful red bird loosened her tongue again.

“It was a scarlet tanager, I think,” said Amy.

“Was it? Sure I thought it was a birrd.”

“Of course it’s a bird,” Amy assented, repressing a strong impulse to laugh; “but the different kinds have different names.”

“Sparrers is a good kind. There was a pair that built a nist in a bush by me kitchen door, an’ me feyther — me feyther said they was sparrers.” Katy sighed with the reminiscence, but finally added: “Wan day I looked out an’ there was an ould snake layin’ right acrost the nist. Me feyther with a stick flung him off an’ kilt him, but the young birrds — the young wans, ye know — were gone; but ’twas the mother birrd that had tipped ’em out so the snake cudn’t git ’em. Well, I thought

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to do her a kindness by putting thim all back in the nist — four av 'em they were. Thin, whin me back was turned, she tipped 'em out ag'in. Four times she tipped 'em out an' the last toime I took the hint."

"What did she tip them out for?" Amy inquired.

"'Fraid of snakes, or cats, or byes. Thin what did she do? Sure she found four little hidin'-places among the weeds in the yarrd, wan for each birrd. Me feyther ses he, 'She's heard the sayin', "Niver pit all yer eggs in the wan basket." 'Tis a practical birrd she is.' Yis, an' many's the toime I've watched her feed 'em the worm, first this, thin another, aich wan in turn."

Katy stopped breathless, and Amy, delighted to have made her talk, capped the story of the "sparrer" with one of a robin, and soon good Mrs. Hooley's prediction was verified. Amy was thinking that the

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drive was a great success and the doctor would be delighted, when suddenly the faint color that the breeze had blown into Katy's face died out, leaving it a ghastly white, and her eyes, wide flung, gazed in horror before her.

They were passing the site of the burned tin factory which she saw now for the first time since that fatal night. It had been completely swept away — burned to the ground, and everything in it had of necessity perished. A vision of her father in the midst of the flames filled her with horror. She swayed and fell against Amy, the world whirling faster and faster around her until she lost consciousness.

Terribly frightened, Amy stopped her horse and screamed. It was the noon hour, when the mill hands were in the streets, and her cries attracted the attention of a dressy young Pole, who, recognizing

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her own best hat, — the ostrich plume waving like a signal of distress, — ran with her two companions to Amy's aid. Anna Cominsky jumped into the carriage and began to chafe Katy's hands. One of her comrades held Firefly, who began to be restive, and the other finding nothing better to do stood in the middle of the street and in voluble and unprintable language, not so broken that it could not be understood, rated poor Amy for bringing the sick child by the scene of the catastrophe.

When at last Katy was brought back to Mrs. Hooley's door she was sobbing hysterically, declaring she would leave the house no more.

CHAPTER VI

MY Lady Bountiful was a very crest-fallen little person as she drove away from Pleasant Corner. She had honestly tried to do a kind deed, but instead of benefiting Katy the drive had caused her much unhappiness and perhaps injured her physically. Amy earnestly hoped it would be a long time before she saw the doctor, who would, she knew, be disappointed and disgusted; but as it happened he was just leaving Lynwood when she arrived. He stopped to inquire how Katy had enjoyed the drive.

Amy at once blurted out the whole truth.

“I drove past the burned factory and she fainted away. It upset her a good deal, and when I saw her last she was almost in hysterics.”

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The doctor bit his tongue. It was a trick he had when determined not to let a naturally hot temper get the best of him.

"Sho, that's bad — bad," he said at last. "You should have had more sense than to do that, but perhaps I'm the one to blame for not warning you. It certainly didn't occur to me that you would choose that street."

"I didn't choose it. I didn't notice where we were going, I was so intent on being pleasant to Katy. At first she seemed afraid and wouldn't say a word, so when at last I succeeded in making her talk I gave her my whole attention. It was Firefly that chose Queen Street. He thought it was the shortest way."

Amy flipped her whip on Firefly's flank, reining him sharply in when he started — a habit she had, which he must have found irritating.

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“Well, well, I see you meant all right. You have a kind heart, but to help another is very ticklish work, and you have to use tact if you hope really to do any good. Next time you’ll succeed better.”

“I’ll never try to do anything for anybody again,” she whimpered, for she was a little upset by this praise after her self-reproach, and the blame of Katy’s friends. “You would never trust me.”

“Oh, yes, I’m going to ask you now to help me with another patient of mine!” he said. “I’ve just been talking with Randall and I find him in a very depressed state of mind. I want you to try to keep him cheerful, and to get him out in the open air as much as possible.”

“Oh, *Rand!*” Amy exclaimed.

The doctor started on with a nod. He understood that the task he had set her excited no enthusiasm, but he had too good

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an opinion of Amy to believe that she would make no effort to accomplish it.

When Rand had first broken down a specialist had been consulted, and it was by his advice that the family had removed to their country place so much earlier than usual; for country life and rest were all that he prescribed. Rand, however, had steadily grown worse, and the morning that Amy had taken Katy to drive his mother in despair had called in Dr. Derby.

The doctor talked a long time with his patient, trying to win his confidence; and as a result Rand had told him his story of broken health and disappointed ambition with much less reserve than usual.

"The fact is, my boy," the doctor said, "that by this rebellion and fretting you are keeping yourself back. No one knows better than I how hard it is to reconcile oneself to a disappointment like this;

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for the reason that I had to bear it myself —”

Rand looked at him with an air of interest, and the doctor went on, seeing that his own experience might be a help to the boy.

“Yes, I was a very ambitious fellow, and my friends had done their foolish best to make me believe that I was to be a shining light in the intellectual world. I worked at my books early and late, paying no more attention to the laws of the human system than if I were an archangel. And what was the result? All at once I broke down — went all to pieces, like an old tub in the sun.”

Rand nodded as if he appreciated the force of this humble analogy.

“Well, in one respect I was more fortunate than you are,” the doctor continued.

“My people were poor —”

“Poor!” Rand repeated.

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“Yes, that gave me no chance to mope and commiserate myself. I couldn’t see my mother and sister work and do nothing myself simply because the sort of work I liked best was forbidden me. Instead of letting them pay a man to take care of the garden, it was my plain duty to take care of it myself, and nothing could have been better for me.”

“There is no kind of work I so dislike,” cried Rand, who anticipated the doctor’s advice to go and do likewise. “Gritty hands set my teeth on edge.”

The doctor chuckled. Perhaps he had felt as Rand did, when years ago he had been forced by poverty to make his mother’s garden.

“It’s good for the health all the same,” he said; “but at all events get out of this dark hole” — they were in Rand’s favorite haunt, the library — “into the air and sun-

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shine. Horseback riding won't make your hands feel gritty; try that."

"I did try it, but the horse I bought is an ugly beast — he balks."

"Well, they will let you have a good one up at the Croft farm. And those boys there would make ideal comrades for you just now — show you that there are things worth living for beside books, and help you to find your way back to your despised mother Nature."

Rand drew himself up stiffly. "I should prefer to limit my intercourse with them to a bargain about the horse. That oldest one is a confounded boor."

"Hmm — it struck me he is ludicrously gentle for such a young giant. However, tastes differ. You get the horse, and, if you don't fancy them, let the boys slide. What you need is some healthful outdoor interest, but above everything a cheerful

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mind. Try to reconcile yourself to this break in your life. I say, and I ought to know, that it has two sides; it isn't all bad —"

"Maybe it isn't," Rand grumbled, "but for the life of me I can't see any good in it."

The doctor looked at him from beneath his bushy eyebrows for a moment, and then burst out: —

"Boy, it will make you *human*. You were growing all in one direction. You cared for nothing but your own advancement in the intellectual line. Now you are forced to stop for a while — waste time, as it seems to you, sit still and think! Now you will begin to develop on another line more important than the last. From this disappointment and trouble you will learn sympathy for others, and the beauty of love and kindness at whose hands you must accept so much."

Rand sighed, but after a moment he held

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out his hand — for the doctor had risen — and nodded.

He wondered if it was because his own career had been blocked in this way that the doctor had been able to speak about his great disappointment without hurting him as others did, especially that eminent nerve specialist who had given his cruel verdict with what seemed to Rand such heartless indifference. No, he never had thought about anything or anybody but himself and his own advancement. To be kind, to have sympathy for others in trouble, had been the last attainments to which he aspired, and even now they seemed cheap, common ends compared to the ambitions he had long cherished.

The doctor's buggy was hardly out of sight before he fell to pitying himself again and bemoaning his hard fate. He was occupied in this way — although he had followed the doctor's advice in so far as

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to leave the darkened room for the piazza — when Lady Bountiful returned.

Amy tossed the reins to Michael, who had come round from the stable, and came up on the piazza.

“So the doctor has been here,” she said, flinging herself into a chair. “I met him going out of the gateway.”

“I sent for him to see Rand,” said her mother, who had come to the door at the sound of wheels. “He doesn’t improve as he should, and these country doctors sometimes are excellent. I hope, Rand dear, you made him understand your condition.”

“Pooh, one doesn’t have to tell him anything,” Rand replied. “He’s sharp. When he raises his eyebrows and looks straight at you he bores right down to your most hidden secret. He gets clear down to your very heart.”

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"Well, he said mine was a good kind one," said Amy with her light laugh.

"Hmm, he ought to live in the house with you."

"Now, Rand, why do you say such things to Amy? She *has* a good heart. If she hadn't she wouldn't have gone on the errand she did this morning." Mrs. Carew looked at her daughter with a fatuous maternal smile, and then added: "She must have seemed a dear little angel to that child at Pleasant Corner."

"Oh, no, she didn't!" cried Amy, blushing; and she gave a graphic account of her experience.

"I suppose you were so taken up with yourself in your new rôle of philanthropist that you didn't know where you were going. Deliver me from being patronized by a minx!"

Amy colored violently, for there was a

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grain of truth in Rand's supposition, and flounced into the house. She had thought of asking him to go with her that afternoon into the woods, in accordance with the doctor's request to keep him out of doors, but she said to herself that he was too disagreeable. She spent the time in her hammock reading a book that interested her while Rand ran mole-like into the house to pass the long afternoon alone and uncomforted.

After dinner, which was a late repast at Lynwood, Rand said that, as he felt sleepy, he should go directly to bed.

"To equalize things, I suppose," Amy commented. "Last night you sat up till twelve."

"I wasn't sleepy last night. There's no use going to bed to lie staring awake, you chump. Even when I did go to bed I couldn't sleep."

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"It's queer, isn't it, mamma," said Amy giggling, "that a person so clever as Rand is can't do such an easy thing as to sleep?"

"I suppose you think you're funny. I wish," cried Rand, stopping on the threshold, on his way to his room, to hurl his vindictive words at her, "I wish you couldn't sleep for a week."

"Amy hasn't the slightest realization of what you suffer in this way, Rand dear," said their mother. "She *can't* sympathize with you."

"Sympathize with me!" he snorted. "I should as soon go to a tadpole for sympathy. All I ask of her is that she won't dance a hornpipe outside my door as she did one night this week, the only night, too, that I had got to sleep."

Amy promised penitently that she would not disturb him again, and Rand went upstairs. It was very quiet in the library

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where Amy sat with her mother, who was writing letters. The evening was dull, for she had finished her book and no one called. Earlier than her customary hour, therefore, she bade her mother good-night, and called Flossie, her little terrier, who slept at the foot of her bed. But Flossie had decided objections to house walls on beautiful moonlight evenings, and Amy was obliged to chase her some time before she finally had the truant under her arm. They were both in high spirits as she mounted the stairs, and when, as they reached the door of what Flossie probably considered her prison-house, she made a wild dash for freedom, Amy gave an excited scream and tore after her down the length of the hall and the staircase.

At the foot of the stairs her progress was barred by her mother, who at this disturbance had rushed swiftly from the library.

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“Hush, hush,” she whispered. “You’ll waken Rand;” and, quite indifferent to the fact that Flossie would be left outdoors all night, she led Amy back to her room. Amy had a glimpse of Flossie watching proceedings from the hall doorway, probably enjoying the change of programme which made her mistress the captive instead of herself.

Mrs. Carew was distressed and indignant, finding no excuse for Amy’s thoughtlessness, and now Amy added to her offences by laughing, not in indifference, but at her mother’s rather ludicrous attempt to scold her in whispers.

When at last, refusing a good-night kiss, she left her, Amy did not feel sleepy. She missed Flossie, and as she lay there alone in the quiet and darkness the events of the day passed panorama-like before her. Again she was driving with Katy, trying to amuse her, to break down her reserve,

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to make her feel at ease, and again she saw that horrible pallor on her face and the horror in her eyes. She heard again the reproaches of the mill girls and Katy's sobs as she left her in Mrs. Hooley's arms. How depressing it all was! She wondered, as she tossed from side to side, if Katy, too, was awake and if she were suffering more in consequence of the shock she had had. When the hall clock struck ten, it seemed to Amy she had been in bed for hours; and now, for the first time, she began to think about Rand and to wonder if she had wakened him. By the creaking of his bedstead and a half-suppressed groan she knew that at all events he was awake now.

Rand's room adjoined hers, and presently hearing him go to his window with an exclamation of impatience she got up, and, leaning far out of her own window, called to him.

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"Dormouse, are you awake?" he responded, "go back and snooze."

"Oh, Rand, did I wake you up?" she asked.

"You did your best, but I haven't been to sleep yet."

"Neither have I, it's so hot and horrid to-night. Wouldn't it be nice to sleep out of doors as the Crofts do?"

"It would be nice to sleep *anywhere*," said poor Rand.

Lynwood in the moonlight was more beautiful than ever. Its sheen made the lawn like a silver sea upon which the groups of shrubbery and trees seemed to float like islands. The occasional whinny of some wild animal alone broke the peaceful silence.

"What's that, I wonder?" said Rand, listening.

"Thea would know; you had better ask her. And that reminds me, Rand, let's

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go to walk to-morrow. I haven't been to the Croft woods for ages, and I don't want to go alone."

To Amy's surprise he agreed, and having appeased her conscience in this way, she went back to bed and was soon asleep.

CHAPTER VII

“THE doctor advised me to take a long walk late in the day as a cure for sleeplessness,” said Rand, as he set out the next afternoon with Amy for the Croft woods. “It’s a weary business, but here goes.”

It had been a phenomenally hot day for the month of June. The fierce sunshine seemed to wilt even the roadside weeds, and no breeze stirred. This trying atmosphere, in his present weakness and after many nights without sleep, had so worn upon Rand that he could hardly drag one foot after the other.

However, the woods when they reached them were cool and pleasant and so lovely that Amy went on and on, always seeing a

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still more beautiful spot beyond. At last Rand came to a dead stop.

"I'm not going another step," he declared. "There's such a thing as getting *too* tired to sleep."

"Oh, just come on a little farther," Amy urged. "It's lovely yonder beyond the pool. But what is that object by those big trees? See, it moves."

"Where?" asked Rand adjusting his glasses.

"Why it's *Thea*. What is she doing? Look! look!"

For a moment they stood motionless behind a screen of young evergreens, watching a charming woodland comedy.

Thea stood under the pines, calling to the squirrels who came leaping from the trees. With a confidence born of a long intimacy they climbed to her shoulder, one bold fellow even higher in his eagerness to

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get the nut, held at arm's length above her head. Dressed in neutral colors her figure did not sharply disengage itself from the surrounding grayness, but her sweet, uplifted face, her round arm bare to the elbow, gleamed pearly white upon the misty shadow tone of the grove.

Having at last possessed themselves of all Thea's nuts, the gray-coats frisked away, and, the sport ended, Thea flung herself upon the ground. As they walked on Rand quoted:—

“Then Nature said a lovelier flower

On earth was never sown.

The child I to myself will take,

She shall be mine and I will make

A lady of my own.”

“Spouting poetry, — and about a *girl!*” cried Amy in a teasing voice. “I’ll tell Thea what a silly you are.”

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This threat was immediately carried out; but if Amy thought that he would be chagrined she was disappointed. The grouty Rand actually stooped to flattery.

"You and the squirrels made a picture, I can tell you," he said to Thea. "If I were a painter I should want no prettier subject."

"Fanshawe painted me once with a squirrel, but I was sitting in the house by a window and he soon threw it aside as a failure. Somehow he never paints me without pines around. Once he began a sketch in which I was leaning against a stile, but the stile turned into a pine trunk. And another time I was sitting on a bench in a garden, but after a while I disappeared, and a beautiful young lady with a rose in her hair took my place. Fan said I ran off into the woods."

"I dare say," said Amy, "for I never

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saw any one quite so fond of the woods as you are. I wonder what you do in them all by yourself all day."

"Feeds the squirrels and makes balsamic couches for weary wayfarers to rest on."

As he spoke Rand dropped down on a great heap of pine needles that had been gathered together near by. There were other heaps beyond, toward which he waved his hand as a proof of his assertion.

"What are they for, Thea?" Amy curiously inquired.

"The boys and I fill our mattresses with them," she answered. "When it's too cold, or it rains so we have to take to the house, we like to sleep on the pine needles. It's next best to being outdoors, and the pine needles, you know, are said to make you sleep."

"Do they?" cried Rand, sitting up. "I wonder if they do. I really began to feel

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sleepy while lying on 'em. I've a mind to try 'em."

"And I, too," said Amy; "it's so terrible to lie awake nights."

"Poor, haggard victim of insomnia!" Rand exclaimed. "She once lay awake half an hour. By all means, let us each have a pine bed."

Amy said she would have the mattresses made as soon as possible, and then they would come and fill them; but Thea offered her a couple of the sacks which her mother kept on hand for this purpose, so the trial might be made that very night. While Rand rested the two girls went to the farmhouse to fetch them.

Fortunately when half there they met Davy with a load of hay. Returning from the meadow, he had picked up Fanshawe by the way, who was trudging home with his sketching paraphernalia

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and who now lazily reposed on the top of the load.

Hearing what was going on the boys offered their services in filling the sacks, promising to make a picnic of the affair, and as soon as the hay was unloaded, they joined the others in the pine wood.

This big Dave had an unusually sympathetic nature. One in trouble, let him be his bitterest enemy, received the tenderest consideration at his hands. He managed in this case to show his sympathy with such tact as to make Rand forget the episode of last March in which he had considered himself so grievously insulted. Seeing that he was very tired by his long walk, he left the filling of the sacks to Fanshawe and the girls, saving Rand's pride by sharing his idleness.

When the work was done, he proposed taking the sacks to Lynwood on the hay

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cart, letting Rand sample his bed on the way, lying in state like a princess in a fairy tale, — a plan Rand gladly availed himself of, having groaned in spirit every time he thought of the long walk home.

By now the sun was going down and the sound of a horn broke the quiet of the woods. It was the Crofts' supper hour. On the edge of the woods two figures appeared: the Dorcaster sage with a can of milk, and his wife carrying a basket.

"Here comes supper," said Dave, while Fanshawe ran forward to relieve his mother of her load.

"I had no idea it was so late," cried Rand. "Amy and I had better start on. We can send a man up for the beds."

The warmth of the Croft hospitality, however, overcame his reluctance, and the young Carews sat down with the rest. The supper consisted of the same simple

fare as on the foregoing occasion, with the addition of some huckleberries. Their wild aromatic flavor pleased Rand, who was in his best mood, inclined to be pleased with everything. Whether or no his pampered palate really relished this plain diet, he ate with unusual heartiness. Amy, however, disliked milk, which she always refused at home on account of its "barny" flavor, and she played with her spoon in a way that distressed Thea, caused Rand to send her disapproving glances, and finally attracting the attention of Mrs. Croft, some lady's-fingers were sent for, which she ate with her berries.

Rand seized this opportunity to consult Mr. Croft about a horse.

"What's the trouble with the one I saw you riding the other day?" Mr. Croft inquired.

Rand explained, whereupon his host declared:—

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“Why, you can break him of balking with very little trouble. I once had what was called a very obstinate case of that sort to deal with. The horse was sold to me for a song as being wholly unfit for use on account of this habit. Well, the first time I used him I drove him to the wood lot for a load of wood. He went there all right, but when my wagon was loaded and I was ready to go home he refused to move. So I pottered about awhile, pretending I wasn’t really quite ready to start, and then tried him again. No use! He wouldn’t budge an inch, and he looked ugly. He probably thought that, as usual, he would be beaten, for that is the way nine men out of ten try to manage a horse. Instead of that I tied him to a tree and went home. This was early in the afternoon and I left him there until supper time, when I tried him again with the same result. So I gave

him his supper, covered him with a blanket, and there he stayed all night, hitched to the load of wood and tied to a tree. In the morning he didn't need a second invitation to move on, and I never had any more trouble with him. I would advise you to experiment awhile with that horse of yours before you buy another."

This plan interested Rand, who took the advice that was given him. By kindness and tact he finally succeeded in breaking the horse of his bad trick, and in the process boy and horse learned to understand and love each other.

The sun had long set when the hay cart, so bedecked with green as to look like a locomoting bower, arrived at Lynwood.

CHAPTER VIII

WHETHER or no it was the effect of the pine-needle bed, or owing to a day spent partly in the open air, or because of his simple supper or the unusual cheerfulness of his mind, or all these reasons together, Rand slept well that night.

A few days later he and Amy drove over to the Croft farm to look at Fanshawe's sketches. Neither of them knew anything about art, nor could appreciate the fine quality of the work they saw, but Rand fancied his sketches of the pine woods with their cool, limpid, amethyst-colored shadow-tones, shot with golden lights, and there was much jesting over an order he gave the artist for one in which Thea feeding the squirrels should make the foreground. Afterwards

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they became more serious and confidential. Fanshawe spoke of the long road that lay before him and the necessity he was under of stopping now and then to earn money to carry him along. Dave told of his own ambitions, long set aside in order to give his father the help he needed on the farm. Rand could but see that his own case was only one of many, and the cheerful philosophy with which the Croft boys bore their disappointments made him thoughtful.

Meantime Thea took Amy to the house to show her the changes which had been made in her own room since she had seen it, and which Thea thought, notwithstanding the daintier furnishings of Amy's, the prettier of the two.

Amy was greatly interested in plans for a fair for the benefit of Katy Ryan, which as they walked on she unfolded to her companion. Thea objected that there had

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already been two fairs that year in Dorcaster.

“Not like the one I am thinking of,” Amy rejoined. “It’s to be in a large tent on our lawn, with small tents or booths around it for gypsy fortune telling, silhouettes, and all sorts of things of that kind. I was wondering if you could not give a side show with Ladylove. I’m sure it’s worth twenty-five cents any time to see her tricks.”

“But nearly every one has seen them,” Thea again objected. “However, I suppose I could teach her some new ones. For instance, she could pass around a hat, and people can put in it what they think the show is worth.”

“What *they* think it’s worth!” repeated Amy disdainfully. “That isn’t the way they do things at a fair. They always squeeze the most out of people they can.”

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“Then it shouldn’t be called a *fair*.”

Amy waved the question aside as of little importance, and urged Thea to begin at once to teach Ladylove the new tricks; for the fair, she said, must come off before cold weather, by October at the very latest.

They talked over their plans until they reached Thea’s room, when Amy had a sensation; for the truth is, it was a unique and decidedly attractive apartment.

The furniture was not new or fine: a small iron bedstead, an old-fashioned bureau, a few chairs, washstand, and a large round table in the middle of the room on which were scattered books, writing materials, paint box, workbasket and the like, for there was no money in the Croft family to spend on bookcases and desks. Love and ingenuity, however, had made good this lack, and Thea’s brothers had contrived to make her a nest so charming as to draw from

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Amy an exclamation of astonishment and delight.

First Fanshawe had painted the walls a soft, pearly gray, designing at the top a border of rich colors. It was not a set pattern, but was of great variety, and the lower edge was more or less broken by irregular depending forms, until — the colors here becoming softer and more delicate — over the bed it occupied nearly the upper half of the wall space in a design suggestive of sweeping wings. With a decoration like this, shelves of bric-a-brac and pictures were better dispensed with, and the few Thea had — an antique mirror, an unframed sketch of her father, an old silhouette and her grandmother's sampler — were grouped together over the bureau. And now we come to the chief feature of the room, that which gave it its distinctive charm. This was the arrangement of one

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of the windows, of which Dave had made such a nook as — it's safe to say — had not its counterpart in the country. There was a broad seat or narrow platform under this window, upon which, when there was mending or studying to be done, Thea sat with her materials around her, for here she could look from time to time into the dusky tops of a little group of pine trees, ten or a dozen perhaps, that grew close to the west wall of the farmhouse. The seat had another use, however, for it also served as a step to the window ledge, from which, by a narrow-railed bridge, she could pass into a bower securely lodged between the tree branches. Perhaps it was more like a great nest than a bower, for, though strongly, it was roughly built, somewhat cup-shaped and with mossy bark on the outside. The pine foliage made a waving canopy over it in which the pine warblers, grown

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accustomed to this strange tree-freak, trilled sweetly.

The two other windows in Thea's room gave it plenty of light and sunshine, and the music and the cool shade of the pine trees on warm days were soothing and pleasant. In storms they lent a wilder charm. The moonlight shining through them was weirdly beautiful, casting fantastic shadows on the large wall space opposite Thea's bed; but the effect in the room was most magical at sunset, when, as now, a mellow light sifted through them and flickered on the pearl-gray walls.

As Amy entered a little tree-friend — a squirrel — sat eating a nut on the window ledge, helping himself from a basket of hickories placed there for his convenience. Outside the window were large wicker cages without doors, refreshment stations for the birds, and the room was full of the

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dee-dee-deeing of a company of thirsty chickadees.

“I have a great many visitors,” Thea said. “It’s as if we exchanged calls; for there are other nests beside mine in the trees. Last summer a dear vireo got so tame that she would eat a strawberry which I held out to her on the end of a hat pin, while she sat on the nest, and once — oh, that was a *red*-letter day — a scarlet tanager flew right into the room.”

When Amy had passed back and forth on the bridge to the tree-bower two or three times, and had seen everything in the room, she hailed Rand who, with Fanshawe, had left the old barn studio and was walking toward the house; for she was not unwilling to have him see how much trouble Thea’s brothers had taken for her.

The squirrel and the chickadees were gone, but a south breeze had sprung up,

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filling the room with the wild music of a rude æolean harp. Rand, like Amy, was impressed by the charm and beauty Dave and Fanshawe had given to this farmhouse room, but it apparently excited no spirit of emulation in him, for when Amy declared that if there were only pines close by the house at Lynwood she too would have a bridge and a bower and an æolean harp in her window he answered scoffingly:—

“These things wouldn’t suit you, and they wouldn’t harmonize with your fine-lady gimcracks. The birds would know that you would want their plumage for your hat, and the squirrels would skip at the sight of you, guessing that you have squirrel-skins to line your cloaks.”

“And I suppose, of course, the wind would make no music on *my* æolean harp,” cried she, with an airy laugh that was meant to hide her anger and mortification.

CHAPTER IX

ONE day when Dave and Thea were walking past Lynwood they saw Rand in the orchard, spraying pear trees. He was feeling much better than when he saw Dr. Derby, and, having found good such of his advice as he had followed, he had wisely concluded to take all his remedies. So at last he had turned to agriculture, giving his particular attention to fruit as being what he called the least grimy part of farming. The way he worked showed the energy of his nature, and for a moment or more the two watched him with amused interest.

“Rand will do something in the world, even if he has to give up his chosen pursuit,” said Dave. “See how thoroughly in earnest he is in doing this work which he hates.”

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As an actual fact there was a positive violence in the way Rand was working, every now and then stopping to jerk off a blighted or decayed pear. One of these he flung from him with disgusted and angry force in the direction of the bystanders, and had Thea not ducked her head she would have received it full in the face.

Aware, by her startled exclamation, that some one was on the other side of the wall, Rand jumped down from the ladder and ran toward them.

“Oh, I beg your pardon!” he cried, seeing her. “If I had known that any one was here I should have been more careful.”

“It served me right for spying,” laughed Thea, “but the vim with which you ‘farm’ is so entertaining.”

“Yes, with all that zeal you will be a great success as a farmer,” added Dave, grinning.

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“Oh, you may laugh! I don’t know anything about farming and I don’t want to,” cried Rand. “It’s the most filthy, grovelling, grubbing, back-breaking, and mind-degrading occupation ever followed by man.”

“If you know all that about it, I should think you knew a good deal,” commented Thea.

Rand went on aggrievedly, without noticing her remark: —

“And I think a man’s life should hold something more than digging and pottering about in the dirt, or running around with nasty messes for the destruction of bugs — so-called pests — that we pester continually.”

“You do make a good case out of it,” said Dave. “I reckon you’re tired.”

Rand nodded.

“I’ve set out three hundred strawberry

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plants this morning. They were advertised as 'ever-bearing strawberries,' but they will probably turn out to be *never-bearing* strawberries. Next I shall get some of those raspberry-blackberry vines, said to combine the good qualities of each, so at table you can serve those who prefer the first and those who prefer the last out of the same dish."

"Perhaps they combine the *bad* qualities of both," suggested Dave, unkindly.

"True, but I want to encourage this sort of thing. Agriculture is sadly in need of being simplified. I think now there should be a composite fruit tree. First it might be hybridized with a banyan so that each branch would go looping off on its own account, forming a distinct orchard, each one of course bearing a different kind of fruit, so that one could walk from one arcade to the other, gathering respectively

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pears, peaches, plums, apples, and so on, all of which should ripen every month in the year. Another move in the right direction would be a combination vegetable. How tiresome to have to cultivate one sort for root and another for fruit! What 'we farmers' want is a variety that forms, say potatoes underground and tomatoes on the plant."

"And while we are about it," added Dave, "we might have a composite sort of creature; for instance, a cow that lays eggs, or a hen that gives milk."

"Perhaps you think this is wit," cried Thea. "I'm going on, that is if Amy is at home. I want her to come and see Ladylove's new tricks."

"She is at home, but Cora Redmond has just come —"

"Oh, well, then I'll not go!" said Thea, who knew by experience that under these

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circumstances Amy would not spend much time at the Croft farm.

“Won’t I do as well?” asked Rand. “I’m beastly tired of working, and I’m a good enough spectator for a rehearsal.”

“I suppose I’ll have to make you do, but you are far from an encouraging person. And then you are always scoffing at the idea of our fair.”

“Don’t you think Katy Ryan is a very unsatisfactory object of charity?” Rand asked. “The whole town is bent on doing agreeable things for her, and as far as I can find out she doesn’t care a straw for any of them.”

Rand being tired followed the others on horseback, and whether he approved of the fair or not he enthusiastically applauded Ladylove’s performance.

Although Amy’s time was otherwise employed, Rand, in those days, came often

to the farm. Always sure of a welcome, he was yet never pestered if by chance he preferred to stay away. A master hand at grumbling, he grumbled continually in his quizzical way without giving offence, without apparently wearying them. In his bitter moods they bore with him, and comforted him if they could. He had his faults, and grave ones, yet his was not a small nature. If he blamed those who by the stimulation of his boyish vanity had encouraged him in his reckless waste of health and nervous energy, he allowed no sign of this to escape him. He seemed to blame only himself and his selfish absorption in his own advancement, and his physical suffering he bore bravely.

They liked him. Perhaps, had it not been for his great disappointment and his bodily weakness, he would not have appealed to them in any way. If, for instance,

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they had met him in the full tide of health, confident of himself, conceited, regardless of everything but his own intellectual progress, they would not have cared for him, but now the pity of his wasted talent and this physical wreck in his eighteenth year touched their sympathies.

Turning from the forbidden realm of books, they tried to lead him to Nature with her simple health-giving interests and her beauty and balm. At first they had little success, but as the weeks passed he grumbled less.

Long hours spent under the trees leave us with a new wisdom. The patience and repose of nature at last impressed themselves upon him, and he began to lose his aching egotism.

CHAPTER X

IF the sight of the ruins of the old mill had resulted in Katy's giving up her father as forever lost to her, thereby ending the strain of hope ever deferred, it would not have proved so regrettable, but in a short time her expectation of his return was as eager as before; only now the sanguine day was followed by terrible dreams at night when she saw him wrapped in flames or struggling in the heart of the fire.

In her present weak condition there was no question of another drive. The kind attempts of the Dorcaster girls to give her pleasure utterly failed. To all inquiries as to what she would like she made but one answer:—

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“I wants me feyther. I wants me feyther again.”

When the dog days set in a smothering sultry air settled over Pleasant Corner and a slow fever burned in Katy's veins.

Whenever she was mentioned Dr. Derby looked gloomy and admitted that she grew weaker every day.

There was much sickness that year in the village and surrounding country which kept him busy. He was never called to the Crofts, however, but he often stopped to talk to the Dorcaster sage, which he said rested him almost as much as a night's sleep.

One day when he was returning from his visits to patients living in the direction of the Croft farm, his horse suddenly shied at something in the road. With a glance at this something, he drew rein and got out of his buggy.

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A man lay by the side of the road, apparently dead. At first the doctor suspected foul play. Upon closer examination, however, he discovered that he had been hit by an engine; for the spot where he lay was but a stone's throw from the railroad. His face, gashed and bruised, covered with blood, was unrecognizable, but he was presumedly a tramp and most likely he had been walking, half drunk, upon the track.

The doctor found that he was not yet dead but life was fast ebbing away, and what was to be done for him was to be done at once. He needed in this work another pair of hands, and he was thankful to see a vehicle rapidly approaching. It proved to be the smart trap of Amy Carew, whom he hailed with scant ceremony:—

“Come here. I need help. Make haste, child!”

Amy looked at the wounded man, and turned pale.

In truth he made a ghastly sight, with his gashes, his filthy clothing, and lying in a pool of blood.

“All you have to do is to hold his head steady,” said the doctor coolly. “Be quick!”

Amy had got out of the carriage and now, with trembling limbs, came forward.

“Oh-h!” she gasped, looking again at the injured man. “Oh-h!”

“Yes, I know it’s a tough sight,” said the doctor, who was getting his bandages ready, “but it’s a case of life and death, and there’s no one but you to help me.”

“Oh, it makes me — it makes me *faint!*”

“Don’t think of yourself! Now get down and hold his head together — so.”

The doctor showed her what she was to do, but with a sudden rush of repulsion she backed away, crying, “Oh, I can’t —

I can't! I'll go and send some one to help you;" and in spite of all his commands or entreaties she jumped into the carriage, driving off in the direction of the Croft farm.

Thinking that his only chance of help was lost, the doctor turned once more to his patient and was about to attempt his task unaided, when Thea, who had been blackberrying in a field near by, pushed through the roadside bushes.

"Come here!" said the doctor a second time. "I need help."

Thea obeyed, and looked at the wounded man, as Amy had. She, too, turned pale.

Paying no attention to the horror in her face, he gave his directions.

Thea hesitated. She felt sick and longed to run away, but, instead of doing so, dropped down by the man's side, holding his head as she had been told. Her habit

of doing without question whatever was to be done helped her.

“That’s right, so so,” said the doctor reassuringly. “Steady, steady now and we’ll have him fixed up in no time. That’s right. You’re doing finely, finely.”

Thea, however, no longer needed her courage quickened. The moment she touched the man all sense of disgust, of repulsion, passed away. All the warm friendliness of her nature, all her humanity revived. This was a fellow being in distress, and she could no more have refused to help him than if he had been Davy or Fanshawe.

“Sister Theodora, you’re a trump!” he said to her as he deftly finished the operation. “Now we have him in good shape, the next thing is to have him taken care of. We must get a stretcher and some men to help move him.”

“Father and Dave are getting in the

meadow hay. They can carry him on the hay cart," said Thea, thinking of the gay occasion on which, in a bower of green, they had carried Rand home.

As, a few moments later, the poor creature was placed where the boy had lain, she felt the contrast even more keenly.

"Where shall we take him?" asked Dave, as he gathered up the reins.

There was a pause. Then Thea's father said:—

"My house is the nearest, take him there."

Before they started Amy returned. She had brought Mrs. Croft to give the doctor the aid she herself had been unable to give him. Now, finding her services not required, they hastened back to the house to get a bed ready and all preparations made for the reception of this unexpected guest. The hay cart slowly followed, Dave driving

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carefully and his father walking beside it, and the rear of this mournful cavalcade was made by the buggy in which rode the doctor and Thea.

While the others were occupied in caring for the wounded man upstairs, Amy and Thea, who had hurriedly changed her clothing, sat on the kitchen porch talking in low tones; for the groans of the sufferer, who was again under the doctor's hands, came distinctly to their ears from the windows above.

"I wonder who he is," said Amy. "He couldn't have been a beauty at his best, I should think, but now his nearest and dearest couldn't recognize him." She shuddered, recalling the ghastly face that had so unnerved her.

"They think he is a tramp. It doesn't seem as if tramps have any 'nearest and dearest.'"

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“Well, if he has, they ought to be grateful to you, for the doctor couldn’t have saved him alone —” said Amy.

“Why, he would have managed somehow, of course,” Thea interposed; but Amy went on in the same strain: —

“Oh, what a tremendous thing to save a man’s life! If I had done it, or even as much toward it as you have done, I should feel — oh, I don’t know how I should feel. I wonder why I couldn’t have helped the doctor,” she went on wistfully. “I *wanted* to. I felt sorry for the poor man, and yet — and yet I ran away. I must be what Rand calls me — a *minx*.”

“I don’t know just what he means by it, but if it’s anything horrid I know you aren’t one,” cried Thea, putting her arm around Amy’s waist and thinking that she was wonderfully winning in this new, wistful mood.

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“He means a very shallow, vain, and selfish girl. It may not be the dictionary definition, but Rand has left me no doubt as to that. And it may be that I really am a minx, in his sense of the word, otherwise why wouldn’t I have done what you did?”

“There must be some other explanation,” Thea asserted. “I have it, ’tis because you are so dainty and refined. You are not accustomed to such work —”

“How many dirty tramps have you found by the wayside and ministered to?” interrupted Amy.

“But I’m accustomed to doing any coarse job that comes along. Look now at those lovely white hands of yours,” — Thea went on placing Amy’s delicate hand beside her own, — “they show that they never come in contact with anything that’s soiled and coarse, while mine — Do you remember

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how disgusted you were the day you found me cleaning Ladylove's stall?"

Amy looked thoughtfully for a moment at the two hands side by side on Thea's lap. She could not help seeing that her own was very pretty, white, and delicate. In her opinion it looked more like a lady's hand than the other.

"It seems," she said at last, jesting, "that if you are to be helpful in the world you must not be too clean. It makes you shrink from your dirty fellow creatures."

Her self-condemnation was genuine, but as soon as she got home, Cora, the cousin, changed the tenor of her thoughts.

It was not until Cora's visit was over that she saw Thea again.

CHAPTER XI

THE injured man at the Crofts' was unconscious for a long time, during which he was cared for as well as if he had been a son of the house. With her gentle ways and physical strength Mrs. Croft was a perfect nurse, and it was for this reason, that made her so useful in her own family, that she was suddenly summoned to her sister's home where there were three sick persons instead of one. The sister lived some distance from Dorcaster.

"You can go as well as not," her husband assured her. "I reckon Anna needs you a good deal more than we do, for we can take care of ourselves, and between the three of us we can take care of our sick friend."

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Mrs. Croft therefore departed. Several weeks before this Fanshawe had accepted the offer of a class in drawing at Lake George, so the father, Dave and Thea settled down to double tasks.

Both Mr. Croft and Dave had a talent for nursing, and whenever they were away Thea could do all that was necessary. In fact, as he grew somewhat more conscious of what went on around him, the invalid showed a marked preference for his youngest nurse.

Things then were going on pretty smoothly, when, one morning, Dave fell from the hayloft and incapacitated himself from service. His ankle was severely sprained, and notwithstanding his disposition to make light of it — in fact he kept himself back by continually trying to use it — he was obliged to give up. The whole burden now fell upon two pairs of shoulders;

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but the sickness of her sister's family proving to be scarlet fever, Mrs. Croft dared not come home and risk carrying the contagion to her own child, and they would not send for Fanshawe, whose position was far too good to be given up.

The days passed slowly. Mr. Croft took all he could upon himself. He hired a woman to watch every other night and induced a neighbor to help now and then with the farm work, but he was anxious for Thea, and Davy, who had nothing to do but to count the steps she took and watch the color fading out of her cheeks, was getting intractable.

One warm afternoon Thea came out of the house for a breath of fresh air, while her father took her place in the sick room. How good it seemed after the pent atmosphere she had breathed so long!

She made straight for the pines, sniffing

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the good, balsamic odor as if for the first time, and called the squirrels round her. She had forgotten to put nuts in her pocket and they soon left her, scolding violently, and walking on, much humbled, she met Rand.

He had not been to the farm for some days, having fancied himself in the way while so much sick-nursing was going on. Rand did not approve of the tramp being domiciled at the Crofts'. It was likely to wear them all out and they no longer seemed to have time or sympathy for their friends. On the occasion of his last visit he had made remarks of this nature, and he had left in high dudgeon. This was before Dave's accident. He had come now with a message from Amy, he explained, as if nothing would have induced him to come on his own account.

"It's about that fool fair," he said.

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“She told me to tell you that it’s to come off in a couple of weeks and she wants you to bring Ladylove over to have her get used to the new place where the performance is to be.”

Rand rather hoped that Thea would resent Amy’s neglect of her since the arrival of Cora, and refuse to go; but Thea’s mind all this time had been occupied with less petty thoughts, and she answered readily that she would come. Hardly were the words spoken, however, than she remembered that she was not free to leave her own home, and that she must give up all part in the fair.

“Amy has another fool idea,” her brother went on. “She and Cora are getting up an operetta to be given the same evening after the fair, which it seems is to be an afternoon fandango. She says it’s to be great fun — her idea of fun seems to be to make

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a fool of oneself for the benefit of a crowd of spectators — and she thinks you're good enough to sing in the chorus."

"Well, she knows very well that I've no voice," said Thea, laughing.

"It wouldn't make any difference if you sang like Patti," he assured her, "she would have to be leading lady herself. I've done all I can to persuade her that she'll turn the whole thing into a farce if she attempts to sing alone, for she hasn't voice enough to be heard three feet off, while she has all the airs and grimaces of a prima donna."

"I don't think it's kind of you to say such things about her," cried Thea, who had often been vexed by his disparagement of Amy. "If Dave or Fanshawe should speak of me as you do of your sister it would break my heart."

"Well, maybe you have a heart to break.

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I can't say as to that, but I know she hasn't. She is a conceited minx," he persisted.

Thea stopped short and gave him a look that he remembered longer than he liked. There was a bewildered surprise in her face more expressive than words.

"I think you are a very disloyal brother," she said and walked on.

The pleasant relation that had so long existed between these two seemed suddenly with these cold words to come to an end. For there was no anger in Thea's manner, and her assertion seemed to Rand, who in spite of his caustic speeches to others did not enjoy them when addressed to himself, to be a final estimate of his character, which fell far below her standard for persons deserving of her friendship. He was piqued and hurt, yet he knew, after all, that she was right. He *was* disloyal to Amy. And he knew that neither Dave nor Fanshawe,

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let her offence against them be what it might, would ever breathe a word against Thea to others. That Amy was irritating and shallow was no excuse, the brotherly instinct should prevent him from speaking of her defects to other persons, or perhaps even from owning them to himself. Perhaps, since he considered himself superior, Thea thought he should help Amy instead of laughing at her efforts to improve herself, and, if her tastes were for foolish, superficial things, interest her in something better. That warm interest of Thea's in Fanshawe's work, her sympathy with Dave's ambitions, that seemed to him so sisterly and pleasant, might be partly accounted for by Fanshawe's patient explanation of the principles of his art, and Dave's confidences on the subject of exploring expeditions.

Rand walked on in silence, crunching the pine cones with fierce footsteps and look-

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ing furtively at Thea, whose sober face he accused of contempt, not guessing that she was repenting of her hard word.

Disloyal! what manly boy can endure such an accusation. But she had given his conduct its right name and opened his eyes to his own meanness. Well, he would swallow his pride and show her that he was not so small as to resent her rebuke.

“At any rate,” he said, breaking the distressing silence, “*you* are not a disloyal friend. I shall tell Amy so.”

“Oh no, only tell her that I shall have to give up doing anything for the fair. I’m sorry but it can’t be helped. Tell her that mother is still away, Fanshawe also, and Dave has sprained his ankle, so that father and I have everything to do.”

Rand expressed his feelings by a prolonged whistle. Then he exclaimed:—

“Well, if you don’t have luck! If I’d

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known anything was the matter with Davy, I should have come up long ago to offer my sympathy at least."

Thea nodded. "I know you would, I'll tell him so when I get home. It must be near milking time and I shall have to turn back now."

"See here," cried Rand, who was now heartily ashamed of the petty feeling that had kept him away from his friends in their trouble, "I wonder if I couldn't milk for your father to-night. He must be worn out with all he has to do."

The idea of Rand on a stool by the side of a cow, adjusting his glasses preparatory to the job he spoke of, upset Thea's gravity completely. He could not help laughing too, and this good laugh cleared the atmosphere.

"If I can't milk the cows, at least I can sit sometimes with that sick duffer," Rand

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persisted, when Thea had regained her composure; "I really want to do something to help you."

"Then come and cheer Davy. We have no time to attend to him, and he just sits by himself and frets."

"Of course I'll come, and glad of the chance to do anything for old Dave," he answered heartily. "I'm sure he's done a lot for me. In fact, I owe you all more than I can say. When shall I come?"

"You might come at once," Thea answered. "He's sure to be dull now on the edge of the evening, when father and I are busy, and it's getting too dark to read."

Rand was very successful in his task of cheering Dave, first by his good company, and secondly by his promise to send a man from Lynwood morning and night to do the chores Dave could do no longer.

As he started home, pleased with the

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novel sensation of doing something for others, he looked back at the house and saw Thea sitting by the window of an upstairs room, most likely the one in which the sick man lay. Her head was bent, and her attitude seemed to show a weariness and dejection that made her look unlike herself.

“Probably she is all worn out taking care of that miserable tramp who never was and never will be any good to anybody,” he grumbled to himself. “I don’t doubt she’s crying because she can’t have a hand in that ridiculous fair and opera business.”

CHAPTER XII

RAND had come close upon the truth in his conjecture of Thea's feeling as she sat with her head in her hands by the window. In the first place, to one so accustomed to living in the open air this close confinement was a misery in itself. In the beginning her sympathy, her love of service, and the excitement had kept her up, but now there seemed to be no ending to her task. Day followed day without any apparent improvement in the sick man's condition. He lay in a deep stupor most of the time, speechless, thankless, a most uninteresting spectacle.

It was only natural that, as she took her father's place by his side that afternoon, she should think of the pleasures she must

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forego. Aside from all the fun, which in truth she really needed after her long confinement, there was the thought that one was working for the benefit of Katy. That she had been able to do nothing or almost nothing for her in comparison with what others had done had sorely distressed Thea, and this plan of Amy's was such a jolly way of helping one! Ladylove's new tricks, too, were so pretty and clever as to be well worth the twenty-five cents that it had been decided must be paid to see them, and if any one beside herself should attempt to show them off Ladylove would be contrary. And how delightful it would be to take part in the operetta — even to sing in the chorus — for everything at Lynwood was planned in fine style. All the Dorcaster school children were to sing, there was to be a real stage with stage scenery and pretty costumes, an orchestra, and a dance

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at the end. While this was going on she would be here in the sick room, or her hands filled with tiresome household tasks! These were the thoughts in Thea's mind when, looking back, Rand had caught that unsuspected glimpse of her.

However, her nature was too healthy to indulge long in the sickly mood of self-pity. Besides, a sick room appeals to one's wider sympathies. Before Thea had dried her eyes there were little services to be done for her charge, and when again she took her place at the window her mood had changed. After all, this poor injured tramp needed her help far more than pretty, pathetic Katy in whom every one was interested. The more unattractive — yes, even repulsive — he was, the more pitiable was his case, and she would not give him unwilling care. The very fact that Rand had pointed out as a reason for turning

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him off — that he was of no value to himself or the world, that he was friendless — was one reason more that she should befriend him; and now, all at once, a great tenderness and pity for him made him seem quite different. He was no longer repulsive to her, only a poor, hurt creature, to whom her heart went out. She turned to see if there was not something to be done to make him comfortable, and found his eyes were open and fixed questioningly upon her.

“Where am I?” he asked.

“At the Croft farm,” Thea answered, going to his side. “We found you lying by the roadside. You had been hurt, and my father had you brought here to be taken care of. You’re better now, aren’t you?”

“Yes — worse luck!” he said, turning his face to the wall.

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While he lay still and, she hoped, sleeping, Thea watched him in great excitement. Now that he had come out of that terrible stupor she thought he would get well, and she hoped that, before he awoke and asked more questions, her father, who would know what to say to him, would come back.

But he was not asleep and presently spoke again.

"I'm afraid you oughtn't to talk," Thea said to him. "Father will know. Do wait till he comes!"

He looked at her a moment and then said slowly and feebly:—

"I'd ruther talk to you than to him; I've a little wan of me own."

"We'll write to her and tell her you are safe here and getting well. Don't worry about her! You'll be well and see her before long."

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He turned his face on the pillow, groaned and then said: —

“No, I ain’t iver goin’ ter see her agin — niver. I’m goin’ ter lave her as the bist I can do fer her. If ’twasn’t fer me fool notion ter come back an’ have wan more look at her swate face, I wudn’t be lyin’ here smashed up by a — engine. Now I’ll lave fer good an’ all.”

“I think it would be very cruel,” said Thea.

At the word he shrank down in the bed and began to tremble.

“Is it crool ye say? ’Twas me croolty to her that sint me off. ’Twas the day I struck her wid the ugly big fist of me that I made up me moind to go. ’Twas drink made me strike me swate Katy —”

“Katy! is her name Katy?” Thea, torn by varied emotions, managed to articulate.

He had gasped out his words in painful

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jerks, and now lay back as if the exertion of talking had been too much for him. For a moment Thea watched him with wide, eager eyes, then she saw that he had fallen back into unconsciousness.

Could it be, she wondered, that this man whom they had cared for so long was Katy Ryan's father? Was the poor tramp, supposed to be friendless and of no value to any one, the beloved for whom that pathetic child was grieving herself to death? Oh, it was too good to be true!

Yet there are hundreds of Katys in the world, and as time wore on Thea grew less and less confident; for this was the last word the invalid spoke for several days.

CHAPTER XIII.

AFTER that talk with Thea in the woods Rand spent much of his time at the Croft farm making himself of use in every way he could, but in a short time Dave was about again.

One afternoon he walked home meditating upon the warm tie between Dave and Thea which had been expressed in his presence in many charming ways, and which made him realize how strange and unnatural his attitude toward Amy must seem to them.

And it really was ugly and unnatural, he owned to himself. If all brothers and sisters are not so harmonious as the Crofts, at least very few, fortunately, are so antagonistic to each other as Amy and himself.

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A short time ago he would not have given the matter a moment's thought, but Rand was growing. His nature was broadening. In his long hours of leisure he had thought a great deal. He had become, as the doctor had prophesied, more human, and he had begun to realize what he and Amy were missing, the especial sweetness of a relationship which makes its strong roots in the morning of life or not at all.

Suppose he should set about righting the matter now, before it was too late. The trouble, he confessed to himself, was chiefly in himself. His sympathies were too narrow, and he saw that he must begin by interesting himself in the things she cared for.

He could think of nothing, however, but to help her with this "fool fair," this "ridiculous pincushion and tidy selling business."

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But no, he told himself scornfully, he couldn't simulate an interest in anything so silly. If people wished to give money to Katy Ryan, why couldn't they do so without all this fuss, without getting knit truck in return?

Reaching home, Rand was met by the news that his grandmother Goldthwaite had been suddenly taken ill, and his mother summoned to her home in Penfield.

Miss Brown, Amy's governess, was away on her vacation, and Mrs. Carew was distressed at the necessity of leaving Rand and Amy by themselves. She had had a long talk with the latter, and she had left word with the servant to send Rand to her the moment he came home.

He found her hastily packing the last things in her trunk. Her eyes were red with weeping and she looked so wretched that he longed to comfort her.

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“Grandmother may not be so ill as you think,” he said, putting his arms around her. “Let us hope for the best, mother.”

Mrs. Carew returned his caress and looked at him thoughtfully.

“You are a dear son,” she said. “You are always good to your *mother*, though you are so unkind sometimes to your sister. I wish, Rand, I did not have to leave you and Amy alone together —”

“Oh, that’s all right, don’t worry about us, mother,” he interrupted; but he could not meet her eyes, for he saw that she was thinking of the last time she had left home, when he had so angered Amy that she would not stay in the house with him, taking refuge with a friend in the next town.

“Not worry! how can I help it? Why, no one knows how anxious I am when I leave you only for a day.”

As he looked into her troubled face Rand

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realized as never before what a strain this constant watchfulness, this effort to keep the peace between Amy and himself, must be on her. For her reassurance he conquered the reserve that would otherwise have prevented him from speaking of the resolution he had just made.

“I promise you that there will be no trouble this time. In fact, mother dear, I had already made up my mind to break myself of my habit of vexing her. I mean to do the fraternal thing now.”

“Oh, Rand, if you only would!” said the poor mother, “you don’t know how much happier I should be.”

“Then be happier,” he said laughing, “for I have given my word that I will not quarrel with Amy while you are gone.”

Rand was repaid for the effort he had made to speak unreservedly by the undoubted comfort it gave her, and the

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recollection of this accounted for a somewhat exaggerated consideration of his sister's pleasure during the following days.

In less than an hour he helped his mother into the carriage, and he and Amy watched her drive away. She had given him a significant look from the carriage window, which he understood as a reminder of his promise, but her last words were to Amy: —

“Look after Rand's cold, and if it is worse to-morrow send for the doctor.”

“It doesn't seem to be much of a cold,” said Amy, as they closed the door and went back into the library.

Rand laughed.

“I didn't know before that I had one, but maybe I have a little. I believe mother lives more in us than in herself, she seems to know so much about us. I suspect, Amy, with our perpetual squabbling we are a terrible trial to her.”

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Amy made no reply. She had been a good deal upset by the news of her grandmother's illness and the tears were still in her eyes.

"Why don't you read your new book? It will take up your mind, you know," Rand proposed in his new rôle of considerate brother.

"Oh, I shall have to practise," Amy answered, and wiping her eyes she went into the music room, whence presently issued one of the tinkling airs of the operetta. Presumably she was singing, but of that one in the next room couldn't be sure.

When they met again at the dinner table Rand said: —

"You aren't going on with that operetta performance now, are you?"

Amy nodded.

"I shouldn't think you would feel like it."

"My feeling shouldn't make any differ-

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ence," said Amy, virtuously. "All the other girls would be disappointed, and —"

"I should think it would outrage your nice sense of the proprieties," he began again; but, seeing the expression of Amy's face, he remembered his promise and forbore to urge the question. For his own part he had a boy's indifference to the conventionalities.

"Mamma would have said so if she wished me to give it up," his sister went on, moving in her chair a little uneasily. "She never mentioned the matter."

"She may have forgotten it in the hurry of getting off, and with so much on her mind," Rand reminded her.

"I suppose you think this is a fine opportunity of making yourself disagreeable," she said, throwing him an angry glance across the table.

"Not at all!" he answered with a wave

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of the hand. "On the contrary, I find it an occasion for being useful, for I prophesy that with mother and Miss Brown both away you'll have your hands full. By the way, why do you have your operetta on the same day as the fair?"

"It isn't on the same day, for it's to be in the evening," was all the explanation Amy vouchsafed.

"Well, if I can help in any way, I am at your service," said Rand.

Nothing could have shown more convincingly how indifferent she considered him to her plans and interests than the tone in which she exclaimed:—

"*You!* You help me, Rand!"

"Yes, I! You never appreciated my musical gift, but I suppose I could act as usher, or supe, or in some such humble capacity."

"Oh no, of course you couldn't sing.

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There isn't time now to learn a part, and then you flat so you would put everybody out —"

"*You* won't put anybody out," he interrupted with a grin.

Fortunately she put a more flattering significance to his remark than Rand intended, and went on amiably: —

"But there is something I would be thankful to have you do. A good many of the village people, so Miss Price told me, are coming to the fair just to see the grounds here. They will wish to see the conservatories, the hanging gardens, the peacock house, Belgian hares and the rest, and there must be some one to show them about. You could do that if you chose, but you will have to dress decently and not go about with your hands in your pockets."

"Dress decently!" he repeated rather gloomily. "I suppose so, that's always

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the next thing. Perhaps you'd like to have me get myself up as Cupid, fairy, or some freak, as that sort of thing seems to be the order of the day. I don't know why it is," he added, relapsing into his old manner, "but girls never can do anything without fussing about their clothes."

"Well, pray don't scold," said Amy testily. "You needn't have anything to do with the fair if you don't want to."

"Oh, I do — I do," cried Rand, recollecting himself. "There is nothing my heart is so set on as helping you out with your fair."

For a moment she looked perplexedly at him and then said:—

"I suppose you will be laughing in your sleeve at everything, but no matter, it will be so much off my hands." And so the matter was settled.

CHAPTER XIV

THE day of the fair was exceedingly raw and disagreeable, unsuited to an outdoor fête.

“You oughtn’t to do that fancy costume business in this air,” said Rand to his sister as he took his place at the breakfast table. “A thick sweater is the thing for to-day.”

The previous evening there had been a final rehearsal of the operetta. The young people, warm and excited, had opened doors and windows, filling the house with draughts, and Rand’s cold was decidedly worse. It was so bad, in fact, that he would have stayed in bed had it not been for his promise to help Amy during the fair.

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“Why didn’t you take some quinine last night?” she asked, looking at him uneasily.

His reply, which seemed to be a scornful disquisition on the folly of dosing, was interrupted by a fit of hard coughing.

“Are you very depressed?” was Amy’s next inquiry.

“Depressed!” he repeated. “I don’t know that I am; why?”

“Then you haven’t grip, for they say one is dreadfully depressed with grip. It’s a mere cold, and I shouldn’t think fresh air would do you any harm.”

“It’s not a mere-cold — it’s a more-cold,” he corrected; but knowing what was in Amy’s mind he went on good-naturedly, “but at all events there is nothing better for it than personally conducting parties over the grounds for the benefit of the Katy Ryan fair.”

For a long moment Amy was silent,

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looking preternaturally sober; then she said in a faint voice: —

“I suppose if your cold is really worse I ought to send for the doctor.”

Knowing that if this were done it would put an end to his plan of helping her, Rand vigorously opposed it and Amy gave a sigh of relief, seeming to feel herself free from further responsibility.

There was little breakfast eaten that morning, for Rand had no appetite, and Amy was too pressed for time. People were constantly arriving with baskets of articles for the sale, and she soon dropped her knife and fork and went out to the fair grounds.

The main tent covered the tennis court. It had already been decorated by evergreen trees and garlands, but the articles to be sold were now to be set out attractively on the tables, and the finishing touches were

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to be put to the booths outside. The gypsy fortune teller wanted some one to help her hang up her bright colored blankets. The light in the silhouette cutter's booth wasn't quite right. The popcorn girl couldn't arrange her strings of pink and white corn without help. A dozen pair of extra hands were needed, and Rand's one pair were by no means to be spared.

Every hour he felt worse, more unable to drag himself about. He hoped Amy would see the risk he was running and release him from his promise; but Amy had other interests than Rand's cold just then. By eleven o'clock people began to arrive and, as she had prophesied, every one wished to see the far-famed attractions of Lynwood. For several hours Rand piloted little parties over the grounds, standing about in the raw wind and, which was worse, undergoing the changes of temperature between

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the atmosphere outside and the heat of the conservatories. Nothing, however, was more characteristic of him than perseverance in a task he had undertaken, and it was never his way to make much of his physical ailments. Besides, Amy had found a use for every man on the place. There really seemed to be no one else to act as guide, and it would not do to let people loose over the place, as it were, free to break branches from the rare trees and shrubs or from the plants in the hothouses, as some of them seemed inclined to do.

Several of the women — good motherly souls, knowing Mrs. Carew was away — were troubled by his exposure to the raw weather, and advised boneset tea and onion syrup for his cough. Miss Pray said that she had, in one of her notebooks, a remedy that was said to be excellent for grip, which she would copy and send to him,

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but nothing happened to relieve him of his task.

Luckily the fair was over at five o'clock in order to give those who were to appear in the operetta time to make preparations. Then he betook himself to his own room, from which he did not have to emerge again that evening.

Notwithstanding the bad weather the fair was a great success, but not much could be said in praise of the operetta. In the first place the preparations had been hurried, and the person who had taken the place of Miss Brown was hardly equal to her task. The best two singers had colds, and with Amy for leading lady it was not likely, in any case, to be a musical treat. However, the audience was amiable, applauding everything without offensive discrimination — the hoarse-voiced singers, and the singer they hardly heard at all,

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with equal heartiness. At all events, as Amy said, whether it went off well or ill, the money for the tickets had been paid, and that was the important thing.

It had been agreed that the Katy Ryan fund should be counted in the doctor's office, for he was supposed to be especially interested in it, having been the means of arousing all this sympathy for his patient. So the small room he occupied over the post office was invaded the next morning by a rosy-cheeked company in little need of medical services, and upon the doctor's operating table was poured out the proceeds of the sale, the money paid to hear the unsuccessful operetta and the contents of numerous tin banks and purses, small private collections made during the summer. It made an imposing pile and seemed to justify the oft-expressed belief that now great things, though no one knew what,

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could be done for Katy. However, the doctor, though he said nothing to dampen these roseate hopes, could not share them. The condition of Katy's mind seemed to make all attempts to heal her body of no avail. She grew weaker every day, and he had begun to think that the poor child's life-journey was nearly over. So, as he stood looking at the heap of money and at the jubilant faces around it, he stroked his beard thoughtfully and said nothing.

"I'm sure we shall have more than this," said Amy; "for though every one was notified that all contributions were to be brought here this morning, two or three girls haven't come. Thea Croft, for instance."

"There she is now," cried several voices, and, in fact, at that very moment, as if hearing herself called, Thea appeared in the doorway.

"Oh, come in, come in!" every one



"AS IF HEARING HERSELF CALLED, THEA APPEARED IN THE
DOORWAY."

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shouted. "How much money have you got?"

Thea, who had entirely forgotten that this was the specified hour for contributions for the Katy Ryan fund to be handed in, felt very awkward.

"I haven't anything," she shamefacedly admitted.

"Nothing!" cried several voices in various shades of disapproval.

"I'm sorry, but I haven't a cent," Thea answered. "I had forgotten that this was the time for contributions, and I came on another errand."

The doctor, who had been watching her with much interest, saw that she was regaining her composure. The declaration was made with independence and a little air of dignity that he liked.

"Why, Thea!" said Amy Carew, "you had saved up over a dollar long ago —

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the money you made selling huckleberries.”

“I had another use for it —”

“She has actually spent the money she saved for Katy!”

Amy spoke in a reproachful tone, looking at her fellow philanthropists in a way that said volumes.

“Come, come,” the doctor interposed, putting his arm around Thea. “You sha’n’t blame her, very likely she has spent her money to better advantage.”

A storm of protestation met his words, and some one exclaimed: —

“As if anything could be better than to help a poor little cripple!”

The doctor shook his head slowly, looking downward in a way he had, and then bade them remember that Katy’s case might be beyond the power of money to remedy, while there were other unfortu-

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nates whose needs could be supplied by its use.

Thea was sure, by the kindly pressure of his arm upon her shoulder, that he guessed and approved the way her money had been spent. And Amy also guessed, if she did not approve, for she suddenly burst out:—

“I believe that the reason she has no contribution for Katy’s fund is because she has given her money to that miserable tramp.”

“I never said that I had no contribution to make,” cried Thea, and the doctor felt a ripple as of inward laughter pass over her. “What I said was that I had no contribution in *money*. I came here on purpose to give my contribution to the doctor.”

“Well, what is your wonderful contribution?” asked the incredulous voice of

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a Dorcaster girl, while the others crowded curiously around her.

The shame and awkwardness caused by their manifest disapproval, which had for a half moment driven her delightful errand from her mind, was gone, and Thea enjoyed her little triumph to the full.

"It is Katy's father!" she said, "for the tramp is Mike Ryan."

For a moment there was a profound silence. Then joyful cries arose on every side, while the doctor danced about like a boy and the girls manifested their feelings with an abandon justified by his hilarious example. Then came endless questions, and Thea was made to tell her story.

"I suspected who the 'tramp' was," she began, "when he came to himself and talked to me about his 'swate Katy' two days ago, but he immediately became unconscious again, and so we couldn't be

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sure. Father and I decided we wouldn't tell any one — not even the doctor — it would be such a disappointment if he turned out to be some one else; and then we couldn't have the fun of a surprise."

"Sly creatures, you Crofts!" murmured the doctor, pinching her cheek.

"It seemed as if he never would speak again; for it set him back a good deal, talking so much at first, but this morning while Dave was with him he came out of his stupor. Dave wouldn't let him say anything except to tell who he was, but by and by he talked a little to father. He seemed to be ashamed, and said his life wasn't worth saving and it would be better for everybody if he had been left to die there by the roadside. However, when he heard how Katy has grieved for him, he said he would try to live for her sake, and father told him he would help him to

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make his life valuable. The poor fellow cried, — he was so weak, you know, — and said he never had a chance in the world. Ever since he was a mite of a boy he has worked in the tin shops because no one would trust him outside. So it was settled that he should stay and work for father — he says he loves farming and horses — and he is going to have the little cottage the Miggses are just leaving. And now,” she ended, “how soon can Katy be told?”

The half-hour the doctor had promised to devote to the business of the Katy Ryan fund had now past. It was high time to make his visits to patients, and he proposed going first to Pleasant Corner, taking Thea with him, and then to the Croft farm.

As the buggy drove off those who were left looked at each other and drew a long breath.

“He went off without taking care of the

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money,” said one of the girls, pointing to the pile on the table. “We mustn’t go and leave it here, for the office door is never locked.”

“It doesn’t seem to be of much account, just now, does it?” exclaimed a rather petulant voice.

“Oh, it will come in all right. They’ll be glad enough to have it to fit up the Miggses’ cottage. Those Crofts are not to be allowed to do everything,” said Amy with her airy laugh.

So the money was carefully tied up in the largest pocket-handkerchief the company could furnish and they left the office in high spirits.

Having walked a short distance toward the stable, where she had left Firefly, Amy suddenly stopped with a gesture of dismay.

“I forgot to ask the doctor to come and see Rand,” she explained. “He has a bad

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cold, and while mamma is away I have to look after him."

"You haven't been looking after him very hard, have you?" one of her companions ventured, — a sarcasm that Amy, in her distress, let pass.

"I'll telephone the doctor in an hour or so. He would have gone to see Katy and to the Crofts first in any case, so it doesn't make any real difference," she said, in self-excuse, but she looked worried and no longer joined in the hilarity of the party.

CHAPTER XV

THE evening was cool with a wild breeze; but Thea, who was too pleausurably excited to go to bed, lay wrapped in a warm shawl in her nest in the pine trees. The waving of the dark branches in the wind gave glimpses of a lucent sky and glittering stars, but she hardly noticed the beauty that ensphered her, so absorbed she was in the recollection of the events of that delightful day.

First, making the necessary foundation for it, there was the unexpected return of her mother and the bliss of her enfolding arms, the slipping from her young shoulders of the too-heavy burdens she had so long borne. Then there was her little triumph in the doctor's office when she had an-

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nounced that the injured tramp and Katy's father were one and the same, and the jubilation that followed that momentary unpleasantness. In the afternoon there had been the meeting of father and child, the doctor judging the fever of impatience the delay would cause more injurious to Katy than the excitement of seeing him. What a favored mortal she was to be able to contribute, in the smallest degree, to that joyful occasion — to the happiness of the poor, long-suffering child!

Katy was brought in the doctor's arms into her father's room and deposited in an armchair full of cushions that had been placed for her by his bedside.

She had laid her head upon his breast with a sigh of perfect content, and he had pressed her to him with a tenderness unexpected in a man of his kind, which accounted, no doubt, for his child's loyal

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love. Then they took one long, long look at each other.

“There’s nothing lift av yer, Katy, but yer tinder hearrt,” said the father with a hard sob.

She hid her face and cried, “Wot’s lift av ye, feyther, do be terrible quare.”

“Niver moind me looks!” Mike hastened to say, remembering his promise to be cheerful. “Sure I’ll soon be recoverin’ me foine bloom — It’s not cryin’ ye are?”

She touched his white face with her thin fingers, answering bravely as the tears fell:—

“Sure for what wud I be cryin’ *now*? Yer face do be awful white, but yer ilegant whiskers are as rid as iver.”

Now that the danger of breakdown was over, they were left by themselves, and when at last they parted again the wisdom of this meeting was proved by their brighter aspect. Before going back to Mrs. Hooley,

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Katy had a long nap, falling asleep with a radiant smile on her face. The doctor prophesied that now her recovery would be rapid.

These pleasant thoughts occupied Thea's mind for a long time, but after a while the south wind singing through the pines had a drowsy effect upon her. In fact, as before she had been too wide awake to go to bed, now she was too sleepy to go. Nothing could be pleasanter, however, than her tree-top cradle, so she lay still, without even thinking, only just conscious of the soft lullaby of the pines. But suddenly a distinct thought formed itself in her mind.

Rand had often told her that the pine trees were continually whispering her name — "The-a, The-a!"

She had always laughed at this fancy and wondered that he did not hear, as

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she did, their impressive “Hush-sh.” But now, all at once, it seemed to her that in the commotion among them made by this wild breeze she did hear her own name whispered. Instantly, however, she realized that the word was uttered by some human creature below, and looking over the side of the nest she saw a figure in a long cape, with streaming hair, making motions of distress and calling to her.

Hurrying back into her room, Thea ran downstairs and opened a side door near which the figure stood. The candle she had caught up as she ran revealed the face of Amy, though so swollen with tears as to be strangely unlike the fair and sparkling face her friend knew.

“Why, Amy,” she cried, drawing her into the house, aghast at her apparition at this hour of the night.

“Oh, I couldn’t wait until morning to

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see you!" she cried hysterically. "And I couldn't stay at home where every one is so angry with me, though not so angry with me as I am with myself."

Thea put her arms around her, trying to calm her and to discover what trouble had driven her out in the night; but Amy kept on crying, repeating, "Oh, I couldn't stay at home where every one is so angry with me!" And when Thea, who was really frightened, made a movement as if to leave her, she clung to her, crying: "Don't get your mother, I can't see anybody. I can't see anybody but you. Won't you let me stay here and sleep with you, Thea, just as I used to do sometimes when we were little?"

"They will be worrying about you at Lynwood, dear," said Thea, leading her up the stairs.

"No," said Amy. "I left word with Eliza that I was coming here. They will

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be glad, *glad* I tell you, to have me out of the house."

She burst into hysterical crying again, and Thea got off her cloak and after a while made her lie down on the bed. By degrees her sobs died away and she became quiet enough to tell her trouble.

"It's about Rand," she began. "He's ill — dreadfully ill — the doctor says he has pneumonia; and it's all my fault."

"*Your* fault?" repeated Thea incredulously.

"Yes, mine. He had a cold, you see, when mamma went away, and she told me to take good care of him. I promised that I would, but I was so taken up with the fair that I neglected him shamefully. I kept him out in the raw weather all that day when I knew — I *must* have known — that he ought to be careful. And then the next morning — why it was this very morn-

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ing, wasn't it?—when I was at the doctor's office I forgot to tell him that Rand was sick, although Rand himself said that he had better see him. Oh, I don't see how I could forget, but I did—I did! When I got home again Rand was in a chill and looked so dreadfully that at last I was frightened. I telephoned to the doctor again and again, but I couldn't get him until noon. He came just after mamma got home."

Here Amy broke down again, recollecting the doctor's indignation that he had not been summoned earlier and her mother's distress.

"You see it's all my fault — all my fault!" she cried distractedly. "I cared for nothing but my own pleasure. Yes, it was the fun I cared for, though I pretended to myself I was thinking only of Katy."

"Oh, now you are unfair to yourself!"

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cried Thea, pressing her hand. "You were really sorry for Katy."

"My charity, Rand told me once, was just a way of having fun, and it's true," she went on, unheeding Thea's excuses for her. "*He* knew. He saw right through me, but now he won't have me blamed at all. Think of that, Thea! I tell you, that cuts. But the doctor was so angry with me; for he seemed to blame me for everything — everything, and he made me see what an affectation, what a pose, my charity is — this part of Lady Bountiful I have been playing — and all the time neglecting the claims of my own flesh and blood. And mother — you know how she always takes my part at such times and how she says, 'Amy *means* right, she has a kind heart and is only thoughtless' — well, mamma stood by and never said a word in my defence. Not that I blame her! I don't — I don't!"

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She hid her face in the pillow with a fresh outburst of tears, and her friend's effort at consolation was unavailing. There could be no doubt of the sincerity of her grief and repentance. It had the true ring, and Thea knew that it would not leave her as before.

As Thea sat beside her, helpless and distressed, she suddenly heard the sound of carriage wheels.

"I think your mother has sent for you," she said, leaning over the poor child.

Amy jumped up, crying, "You go down, Thea, and tell Michael I can't go home. Oh, how *can* mamma want me?"

"Because she knows how you are grieving and she wants to comfort you. Perhaps she wants you to comfort her. I would go, Amy, if I were you," Thea entreated.

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Amy went to the window and looked out.

“Yes,” she said, wiping her eyes, “it’s our carriage. If I go I may be able to help in some way, and I won’t run away out of shame.”

CHAPTER XVI

RAND'S illness was very serious, and although he pulled through it left his lungs in such a condition that it was thought necessary to take him to a milder climate for the winter. This was a bitter disappointment to him, for he had gained so much during the last months that the doctor had told him he might read and study again and he had made many plans for the year.

Mrs. Carew had intended, even before her mother's illness, to spend the winter with her, feeling that she was too old and delicate to be left to herself or to the care and companionship of hirelings. If she felt in that way then, how much more now when she was so much more feeble! The

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poor lady was almost distracted between the claims of her mother and son, but she dared not let Rand, who was careless of his health at all times, travel now by himself.

Nothing, however, seemed to interfere with the plan for Amy's winter. It was to be spent at the Redmonds' in New York, and she was to go to school with Cora. This had long been the desire of her heart, for she was tired of studying with a governess and wished the excitement and stimulus of school life. It was difficult for her to keep the sparkle out of her eyes whenever the winter plans were alluded to, although she tried to chasten her joy with the thought of Rand's disappointment and her mother's distress.

The cheerfulness with which Rand met this second disappointment filled her with astonishment. Whatever his secret hurt might be, he never spoke of it, especially

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before Amy, and his chief concern seemed to be the anxiety of his mother and the inconvenience to her of this journey southward. Again and again he assured her of the needlessness of her going with him, as he was perfectly able and willing to go alone, and urged her to give up the idea and go to the poor grandmother who needed her more.

It was while he was arguing in this strain one day that Amy saw her opportunity. For the first time the thought dawned upon her that she might give up her own plans and go with him to Santa Barbara in her mother's place. In her ardent desire to overcome her selfishness, at the time when her remorse was at its height, she had positively longed to make a sacrifice for him, but now, although a deeper affection for him had been awakened in her by the danger he had been in, and by a new

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kindness in his manner toward her ever since that first fatal kindness on the day of the fair, the very thought of giving up the winter with Cora made her realize how much she had counted on it, and to make the sacrifice seemed utterly beyond her. And yet here was the opportunity, at last, to atone for that neglect of him that had led to so much suffering on his part, to her mother's anxiety, and the necessary change in her plans.

A dozen times in as many hours she determined to make the sacrifice and as many more assured herself that she could not, but at last she sought her mother and breathlessly made the proposition.

Mrs. Carew closed the book she was reading and drew Amy down on a chair beside her own. She was heartily pleased that her thoughtless child, called selfish sometimes by those who loved her less,

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had suggested a plan that would call for so much self-denial. She said nothing, but patted Amy's hand as a sign of her approval, and Amy, whose happy hopes were being hidden behind a dull curtain of renunciation, was too occupied in controlling herself to be voluble.

"As if I would let you two children go to California by yourselves!" said Mrs. Carew at last. "Did you really think, dear, that I would?"

Amy's pink cheeks grew pinker, and she answered with that admirable honesty of hers,—

"I—I thought perhaps you wouldn't. But I'm sure it's very unfair that I, who was to blame for Rand's sickness, should be the only one to give up nothing in consequence. I know I shall feel mean whenever I think of poor Rand spending his winter so differently than he intended, and

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of you worrying about grandmother. And I dare say when too late," she ended, "you will be sorry you didn't let me take your place —"

Mrs. Carew opened her book again with the remark that to argue the question would be simply a waste of time, and Amy went back to her preparations for school with a joyful sense of escape.

Still the disagreeable feeling of self-dissatisfaction was soon as keen as ever. It gave her no peace. It quite spoiled her pleasant anticipations of school life. Again and again she assured herself that in offering to go with Rand she had done all that she could, but she could not shake off the impression that she was behaving selfishly and meanly.

One morning, however, after a refreshing, dreamless night she awoke with a clear vision of whither the path of duty

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led. She awoke with the distinct thought in her consciousness that although her mother would not trust her to go to California with Rand, she would gladly let her stay with her grandmother in Penfield.

But if it had required such a mighty effort to bring herself to make that first sacrifice, — a course which included many pleasures, the joy of travel, of seeing interesting scenes, and of meeting new, interesting people, — she could never force herself to make the other, which meant for her a whole winter passed in a dull country town with a dear but very dull old lady. Her grandmother's house was a somewhat gloomy brick one that stood near the road behind a row of hemlocks, and no one ever came there except the minister, the doctor, and, on rare occasions, some old lady as dull as grandmother herself. Her only companions would be grand-

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mother, Miss Whipple, grandmother's nurse, and Miss Brown; for, of course, her mother would insist that the governess should go with her, that her education should not come to a standstill. She thought of the twenty or more young creatures matching their wits in class at school, and turned her face to the wall with a groan.

All day Amy's lips were sealed. That evening, as usual, the little family were together in the library, Rand and his mother reading, and Amy curled up with Flossie on cushions before the fire. For a while she played absently with the little dog; then the attitude of Rand, his elbows on the table, his hands making a pent over his eyes from which he stealthily gazed at his mother's sad face, caught her attention. Suddenly he reached over and laid his hand upon hers, saying, as if he had read her thoughts:—

“Oh, mother, why won’t you let me go to California by myself? It will be far better for me than to see you worrying as you will if you leave grandmother alone.”

His voice, the tenderness of his manner, and his forgetfulness of himself in his eagerness to spare their mother anxiety, could but impress Amy, it was so unlike his old self-absorption. For the first time she realized how he had changed. He was really considerate of others, while she was still acting a part. For yes, she had counted on her mother’s refusal to let her go to Santa Barbara in her place. She had no idea that her sacrifice would be accepted. She was small and contemptible and always would be so. A sense of shame and self-disgust came over her. Then her higher self triumphed. She jumped up and came forward, her eyes very bright and her lips trembling a little.

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“Mother needn’t leave grandmother alone,” she heard herself say, “for I will go to Penfield and stay with her.”

“You, why that’s a good idea,” cried Rand, turning to look at her. “Do you hear, mother, Amy offers to stay with grandmother?”

“I have been waiting for some time for her to propose it,” said her mother. “I *knew she would.*”

And Amy knew that this time her sacrifice was to be accepted.

CHAPTER XVII

THE winter saw these summer friends widely separated. Amy was the first to go, being settled with her grandmother in Penfield before Mrs. Carew and Rand started for California. The house was left to a care-taker, and the festivities of Lynwood no longer enlivened the town.

The family circle at the Crofts' was reduced by two, for Mike Ryan, whether from gratitude for the care he had received or because he had a natural taste for the work, principally the care of animals, proved himself so useful on the farm that Mr. Croft found he could spare both of his sons. So, soon after Fanshawe returned to his art studies, Dave's chance came, and he joined an

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expedition to explore the forests of the wilder parts of South America.

The installation of the Ryans in the Miggses' cottage or preparations for that event helped Thea to bear the loneliness caused by the absence of both her brothers. In the first place Mr. Croft, who had it papered and painted, left to her the choice of colors and styles. Then came the delightful task of furnishing; for there was hardly anything left of the scanty store of furniture that the Ryans had used in their poor little apology of a home at Pleasant Corner.

It seemed very hard to Thea that Amy should miss the pleasure of spending the money which she had done more than any one else to raise, and she faithfully tried to carry out all her wishes. The wisdom of some of Amy's more fanciful ideas were much laughed at and opposed,

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as, for instance, her wish to have white muslin curtains at the windows. If curtains there must be, cheese-cloth ones, it was maintained by the practical majority, were plenty good enough. In fact, they were too good, as curtains of any kind were, according to these critics, an absurd superfluity. It turned out, however, that they proved, in Katy's case, such an incentive to neat housekeeping that before the winter was over similar ones were distributed among the untidy housekeepers of Pleasant Corner, cheese-cloth curtains as a factor in the reformation of an uncleanly neighborhood having apparently never before been fully appreciated.

"Sure they do make anny room look so ilegant," Mrs. Hooley once said, when Thea and Katy found her in the unwonted occupation of dusting the furniture, "that a bit o' dust puts you to shame."

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The interest in Katy led by degrees to a change for the better in Pleasant Corner. If, by kindness, tact, and what he called "a chance," a sober, self-respecting member of the community could be made of drunken, shameless Mike Ryan, no one need be despaired of. The problem of Pleasant Corner was not hopeless after all, and in a right brotherly spirit the Dorcaster people set to work. In the plans for the improvement of her former neighbors, no one was more interested than Katy, who, with her intimate knowledge of their needs, often pointed to the right way of helping them.

For poor Amy the winter proved a long one, but she never repented having spent it with her grandmother, if for no other reason than the comfort she was able to give her mother by her weakly bulletins of the dear old lady's improving health and better spirits.

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The first week, to be sure, she suffered a misery of homesickness and rebellion; for it seemed to her she could not endure the monotony of those uneventful days, exactly alike, which passed so slowly and soberly in her grandmother's home, and she actually began a letter to her mother declaring that she had already repented of her bargain and begging to be released from it.

The house was very spacious, the rooms so immense that only a large family circle could make them seem homelike. It had been built just outside the town in the good old-fashioned style adapted to a generous hospitality, in what was then a very aristocratic neighborhood. In front of it was a row of very old hemlocks, which gave it an air of elegant reserve. But the town, which had sadly degenerated, had grown in the opposite direction from the

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Goldthwaite house. Fashion had folded its tents and silently stolen away. There were few left to enjoy her hospitality, even if grandmother had the heart to offer it. Even the elegant reserve was gone, two trees having been cut out in the hemlock screen to give to the lonely occupant a view of the outside world.

"Amy," the old lady said to her granddaughter who was moping by the window the morning after her arrival, "isn't somebody going by?"

"Yes, grandmother," said Amy. "It's a boy with a milk can."

"Isn't somebody going by?" asked grandmother again, half an hour later.

"Yes, grandmother," said Amy. "A darky with a bundle."

"Isn't somebody going by?" asked the old lady for the third time, a long hour having elapsed.

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"Yes, grandmother, there's a cow going by," replied Amy.

"Considerable passing this morning," said grandmother.

This little anecdote Amy found serviceable afterwards, whenever she wished to describe life at Penfield.

By the time that first week ended Amy's common sense came to her rescue, and she determined that her sacrifice should not be made in vain. She would leave off moping and give grandmother "the time of her life." In this by no means difficult task, nature having well fitted her for it, she soon forgot that she was making any sacrifice at all. So the winter wore away.

It was April before Mrs. Carew and Rand started for the East, and May before the little family were reunited at Lynwood.

One day, soon after Amy's happy home-

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coming, Dr. Derby, going as once before in the course of this tale to the Croft farm one late afternoon, found the family at supper in the pine woods; only on this occasion they had guests.

As he approached, a great fellow, who was sitting cross-legged between Dave and Thea, jumped up and seized his hand.

"Bless my soul," ejaculated the doctor, "if it isn't Rand!"

"Yes, isn't he big, isn't he splendid?" cried Amy with pretty sisterly pride as she took his other hand in hers.

The doctor looked slowly but beamingly from the brother to the sister. Big and handsome as Rand undoubtedly was, there was something about Amy that touched him more. Her small, sparkling face wore a new fineness, and by his hearty grip upon her hand she was sure he knew all she had conquered in herself since that wretched

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occasion when he had openly denounced her.

“Did you ever think he’d look like this?” she went on. “Why, he is as big as Dave.”

“In one direction anyhow, for I go all to legs. It would trouble him now to pick me up and carry me across the street under his arm. But you never heard of that mean advantage he took of his superior size which explains the grudge I once had against him, did you, Doctor?”

Rand looked laughingly at Dave’s grinning face, bronzed as an Arab’s by a tropical sun, as he told with zest the story that had once seemed to bear so hard upon himself.

“Sit down and have supper with us, Doctor,” said the mistress of the house, as soon as she could make herself heard. “You have come just in time.”

“Yes, because we are all going to tell

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our plans for the future," added Thea, "and we want to know yours."

"But I haven't any plans," he said. "I've no time to make 'em, let alone carrying them out."

"We'll make some for you then," said Amy, making him sit down beside her; "first, to take supper with your friends now and then."

"I know your plan, sweetheart. To wheedle everybody into doing just what you wish. And I guessed Rand's plans long ago."

Rand shook his head. "No, Doctor, I had only one plan in those days — to make a great figure in the world. How glad I am I had to give it up, for I've found out that if I had not, I should miss everything that's worth while."

"I knew if you only had time you'd find that out," said the doctor.

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As the repast proceeded the talk grew more and more earnest, and the vistas opening before bright young eyes were described in all the glowing colors that belong to the morning of life. But, at last, when it was over and everything, as it seemed, had been said, as if impressed by the beauty and solemnity of the place and the hour, a silence fell upon them — the impressive silence in the woods that attends the going down of the daytime queen. Golden lanes into the grove, bright and lovely as the dream-path of their future, were made by the long rays of the sun, and through the mellow atmosphere thrilled the fluty call-notes of the thrush —

“Tu-la-lee. Come to me.”

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